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NEW STATESMAN

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- Stuart Hall on Raymond Williams
- Radio Ga-Ga

STOP

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY – safe in Neil Kinnock's hands?

TODAY'S SEX OBJECT

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NEW STATESMAN

Vol 115 No 2967 5 February 1988

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The health of Britain

MRS THATCHER'S REVIEW of the health service will initiate an attack on that institution of the postwar welfare state which has so far enjoyed the fullest, and least qualified, public support.

One after another, public services (local government, housing, education, now health) have been reduced to crisis by successive cash cuts and central govenment interference. Government ministers then draw attention to the chaos they have caused and claim there is no alternative to radical reorganisation (see pages 15-16). The people who provide the services — teachers, nurses, council officers and members — and the unions to which they belong are blamed for problems — cuts in services, industrial disruption, demoralisation — which the government has itself provoked, at least by bigotry and neglect, very likely by deliberate conspiracy.

So far the government has won (or looks like winning) the battles it has provoked in the public sector. Even though Mrs Thatcher is taking on the most widely respected and popular institution in Britain, there is no guarantee that she will fail. In part, this is because the electoral system has delivered to her an overwhelming majority on a minority vote, and because she commands a system of government which is grossly overweighted in favour of the executive, and of the Prime Minister in particular. (Those Labour politicians who bang away on "gut" issues like the NHS and disparage the growing demands for democratic reforms might ponder on the connection between the two.)

But Mrs Thatcher also prospers because the Labour opposition (even where it has majority public support) concentrates on making speeches in parliament (where is is in the minority) and gaining space in the media (ditto). Both are necessary endeavours, but they signally fail to mobilise the public support which is often there. Labour's parliamentary road to nowhere very far is normally combined unhappily with resistance by the trade unions in the service concerned — which is more often regarded as an embarrassment rather than assistance.

The government has sought to label the trade union resistance as sectional, that of mere producers concerned for their own interests, rather than as the representatives of the people who actually use services and the whole community. Sometimes, as in the teachers' pay dispute, union tactics have played into their hands, and made it more difficult later to rally a large public to the defence of the service.

The NHS is a tougher nut for the government to crack. Nurses are popular and not easily represented as self-seeking. Nevertheless, the hard experience of recent years suggests that it could be fatal to leave the struggle, once more, to the unions alone. If work stoppages and protests in the hospitals grew more bitter, they could be made to look more like the Winter of Discontent than a deeply-felt and desperate attempt to save the health service. Nurses, doctors and other staff — now remarkably united — would surely split, among and between themselves.

There is a pattern of protest that could be followed instead — more like that of the peace movement or the Anti-Nazi League, or the great mobilisations in Paris which first defeated the socialists' reforms of religious education, then Chirac's university cutbacks. We have to involve in protest the public in very large numbers if the basic principle that health care should be provided free at the time of need is to be defended against Mrs Thatcher and her minions.

The political (ie, parliamentary) and trade union arms of the labour movement cannot win this battle alone, nor can any political party. What is needed is a broader campaign, making use of the utmost professionalism, to demonstrate the overwhelming popular support there is for the NHS. That broader campaign exists in embryo — Hospital Alert (National), which is organising a mass lobby of parliament on 25 February.

This wholly voluntary campaign has grown out of a local campaign to save and restore services at the West Middlesex Hospital, in Isleworth. The West Middlesex Volunteers very soon realised that they could not save the Middlesex unless they saved the whole service. So they upped and organised the 1,000-strong consultants' petition which so embarrassed Mrs Thatcher at Christmas. The consultants and other local groups asked them to go national. So they have.

Make no mistake, Hospital Alert is a typically small and underfunded group. It urgently needs more people and resources to make a go of the mass lobby; so far, it has 60 coordinators — local groups and individuals — but has to recruit hundreds more to make an impact on MPs (telephone 01-892 1787). In the longer run, it needs full-time workers to swell the public protest. If it's given a huge populist thrust, Hospital Alert could mark the beginnings of something big. The potential is there: this week pensioners and patients joined nurses on picket lines. In France, strong-willed governments are turned back when hundreds of thousands of citizens turn out against them in the streets. It is time the same happened here. □

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DIARY

Why, I asked Hanif Kureishi this week, are you Public Enemy Number One all of a sudden? The author of *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* seemed baffled. "Why," he asked me in return, "are they so worried about two pissy films?"

The pelting began three weeks ago when the Oxford historian Norman Stone denounced Kureishi's films as "worthless and insulting" because they "run down Mrs Thatcher". Last Wednesday a long feature on the *Daily Telegraph*'s arts page criticised Kureishi for portraying "nastiness in British life" when everyone knows we have "considerably less police brutality, hunger and social division than a majority of countries in the world". (So that's all right, then.) The very next day the whole leader column of the *Telegraph* was devoted to the subject. "It will surprise many of our readers," the paper sneered, "to learn that they are living, not in a country whose name has been a synonym for liberty for centuries, but in an 'authoritarian rathole'. This delicately sculpted phrase, by . . . Hanif Kureishi, subsumes in its most childish form a new climate of opinion . . ." And so on.

The joke, as Kureishi points out, is that he's a Thatcherite success story. "Our films make more money for this country than Norman Stone. *Laundrette* took $5 million at the box office in the United States. Norman Stone's book on Hitler can't have made a tenth of that."

○

The *Telegraph* may scoff at the suggestion that Thatcher is "authoritarian", but how else can one describe her conduct in the bizarre affair of Paisley Grammar School?

The facts are as follows. Strathclyde Regional Council, after a thorough inquiry into falling rolls, decided to close three schools in Paisley, including the grammar school. Andrew Neil, an alumnus of Paisley Grammar who now edits the *Sunday Times*, sprang into action. For weeks he filled his paper's Scottish edition with long features by Gerry Malone, a former Tory MP, singing the school's praises. (The other two schools, being working-class, had no such support.) On 21 January, at a *Sunday Times* lunch, Neil raised the issue with a senior adviser to the Prime Minister. The next day Thatcher wrote to the Scottish Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, asking what he was doing to save the school. Rifkind pointed out that he had no power: the Tories themselves had pushed through an Act in 1982 which insisted that the power of closure would remain with local authorities. The government could hardly defy its own legislation.

Thatcher thought otherwise. On 27 January she suddenly tabled a change in the regulations which would mean that a few school closures could be referred up to the minister. The sort of school covered by the new rule was — well, a school like Paisley Grammar.

She has thus changed the law retrospectively by prime ministerial *diktat* and has humiliated her Scottish Secretary, who sought to obey the law. As Neil boasted to the *Paisley Daily Express* last week: "I used people I know in Downing Street." The paper's local-boy-makes-good story was headed: "How I 'Tapped' Maggie". Quite so.

"GUILTY! The only verdict", the *Daily Express* raved last Friday, claiming that after the Appeal Court's decision only "IRA sympathisers" could now proclaim the innocence of the Birmingham Six. This seems a strange way of referring to Sir John Farr, the Tory MP for Harborough. A funny way, come to that, of describing Charles Moore, who writes a column in the *Express* as well as editing the *Spectator*.

In Friday's *Express*, bang opposite the barking leader, Moore declared that "the convictions are unsafe". I wonder how much longer the *Express* will offer him its hospitality. If all else fails he could always try *Republican News*.

○

Robert Maxwell tells me, via a press release from his busy publicity machine, that he has appointed a Mr Humphrey Mews as Director of the Chairman's Office — the Chairman in question being, of course, Maxwell himself. "I am very pleased that Mr Mews has accepted our offer to fill this very important position," Maxwell booms. "I have been seeking a suitable candidate for this role for more than a year." Mews is at present deputy private secretary to Charles and Diana, and before that commanded a regiment in the Royal Horse Artillery.

But what will he actually *do*? The press release refers inquiries to Peter Jay, who now works for Maxwell under the ludicrous title of Chief of Staff. So I ring him. "Is this on the record?" Jay asks suspiciously. Well, I had rather hoped so. In that case, he says, he can tell me very little.

Odd for a corporation which claims to be in the communications game, but there we are. Perhaps Jay is afraid that we may get on to discussing his own position: for in spite of his grand title, I am told, much of his time is spent deciding who can or can't use the *Mirror*'s car park. (Offenders are wheel-clamped.) In the 1960s he was the "cleverest young man in Britain" and, according to *Time* magazine, a future world leader; in the 1970s, he served as ambassador to Washington; now he is a glorified car-park attendant in Holborn Circus. I leave him to his private grief.

○

Yet another press release from the Maxwell Communication Corporation (they arrive hourly) includes the text of the great man's speech at the Sorbonne last month to launch his "archive of the French revolution". In the presence of President Mitterrand, Maxwell spoke of his other contribution to next year's celebration: "I intend also . . . to put the open spaces at the base of the Grande Arche (which I have just acquired) at the disposal of the Bicentenary."

Whoops! A correction is rushed over from Maxwell HQ. The reference to Grande Arche should have said "which I *plan* to acquire". Maxwell doesn't own the entire world after all. Yet.

○

The *Telegraph* is celebrating the Year of Epilepsy by sacking an employee for being epileptic. The man in question is Ian Corner, a 26-year-old telephone advertising salesman who was hired last November for a three-month probationary period. Two weeks ago, with no warning, Corner was told that his contract would not be renewed.

The company accepted that his epilepsy was under control and wasn't interfering with his labours. It also agreed that his work was beyond reproach. It could hardly do otherwise: in the brief period between 4 January and his dismissal on 22 January, Corner had earned £26,500 for the *Telegraph* and had sold bookings up to next December.

Last Friday, his final day, Corner was told to stand by for good news: he would be paid some compensation. Shortly afterwards the general manager, Andrew Clark, appeared. Shaking Corner warmly by the hand he offered him a handsome pay-off — six days' wages. "I wish you all the best," Clark chirped as Corner sloped off to join the unemployed.

○

The National Front's North London branch held a "social" the other night to celebrate the anniversary of the Battle of Rorke's Drift. A video machine showed the film *Zulu*. The organiser, one Bob Nash, made a speech claiming that the battle showed "the finest qualities of the British — stubborn defence and victory against overwhelming odds."

Hmmm. I should have thought that the lessons of the Zulu War for today were rather different, namely that (a) the National Front's beloved Boers couldn't on their own withstand a determined black struggle; and (b) the British army was led by a bunch of blundering nitwits. Both reflections are still largely true. Neither ought to bring much cheer to the NF's happy revellers.

Francis Wheen

ROGER WODDIS

Some of my best friends

'We are not against homosexuals but against homosexuality.' — Graham Webster Gardiner, head of the Conservative Family Campaign

How doth the kindly Gardiner
  Promote the British way,
And praise the artists we prefer
  (Though not, of course, John Gay).

How solemnly he strokes his chin,
  How gently sheathes his Clause,
And loves the sinner, hates the sin
  That contravenes our laws.

He frowns on Forster, Wilde and Coward
  In keeping with the times,
The goings-on at Castle Howard
  And Britten's *Peter Grimes*.

The flag he flourishes is blue,
  The enemy's is pink;
The hour for gypsy, black and Jew
  Is later than you think.

How right the number 28,
  How bright the books in flame,
And oh, how absolute the Hate
  That dare not speak its name!

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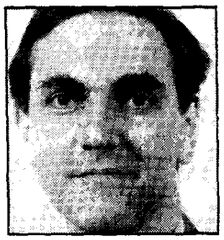

BEN PIMLOTT

The merged centre party will recover; the Owenites won't

WATCHING Shirley Williams and a bearded fellow called Mike Thomas squabbling in front of the cameras about who had the right to use a meeting hall at the SDP conference in Sheffield induced in me conflicting emotions: hilarity, irritation, amazement. Irritation won.

Why should people so evidently unfit for any kind of responsibility have been permitted, over the past seven years, to waste so much of all our time and do so much public damage? But the incident also took me on a trip down memory lane.

I first encountered Mike Thomas in June 1974, sleek, articulate and hungry for the Labour candidature at Newcastle East. I was on the constituency executive, and he eyed me affectionately. His chances seemed good: among the local contenders, all had as many enemies as friends. Thomas had arrived off the train from King's Cross, unknown and therefore untainted, and swiftly scooped up the Co-op Party nomination. With this in his pocket, he set about wooing and impressing the not-terribly-sophisticated local left. It paid off. At the selection conference he spoke well, touching all the left's erogenous zones. On the first ballot he got only 6 out of 34, and was almost eliminated. However, one of his rivals, Joan Maynard, did even worse, and on the second her vote was divided between Thomas and a local Militant. Then the Militant dropped out, and the hard left delegates switched, *en bloc*, to Thomas, giving him victory by 18 votes to 16 over Jeremy Beecham (now Labour leader of Newcastle District Council).

Elected to parliament that October, Thomas quickly made his mark. Locally he proved skilful at taking up issues which gained wide media attention. In a region not then famous for the cerebal qualities of its MPs, he became a popular and persuasive TV performer. At Westminster, he performed creditably in the select committee on nationalised industries. Roy Hattersley took him on, briefly, as his Parliamentary Private Secretary.

Preoccupied elsewhere, I never got to know him well. The last conversation I recall was early in 1975, just after we learnt that he had joined the newly-formed Manifesto Group. Wasn't he supposed to be a left-winger? Hadn't he been the left's candidate against Beecham? I have forgotten his reply. But I do remember the foxy look.

THE BUILD-UP locally to Thomas's defection was odd. Despite what many saw as a betrayal, he was never under constituency pressure. Yet somehow the idea of danger seems to have grown in his mind. As tension between Labour left and right mounted nationally, there was a pre-emptive, Thomas-inspired coup in Newcastle East, and all left-leaning officers in the (pretty moderate) constituency party were swept from office. But it did not make the MP happy. In 1981 he became part of a key group of younger MPs — different from the rejects and washouts — who helped to push the Gang over the brink. His backroom influence at this time was major, even historic. "Launching the party had been an organisational triumph," records Hugh Stephenson, "not least because one man, Mike Thomas, had been in overall executive charge of it" (*Claret and Chips: The rise of the SDP*, Michael Joseph, 1982, £5.95).

In Newcastle, Thomas convinced himself that a high media profile would save him electorally. He was wrong. In the 1983 general election as SDP candidate he came bottom of the poll. Returning to metropolitan base, he operated from the Cowley Street headquarters of the SDP, chairing the party's organisation committee and seeking winnable candidatures. Last year he fought Exeter, describing himself as a "communications consultant" and lost again. It seemed that he was gone for good. Then came the SDP split and his reappearance on our television screens, billed as "one of Dr Owen's lieutenants".

Mike Thomas has travelled a long way, and so, of course, has his master. But — the question must now be asked — to what destination?

> ***'Though the major parties, and especially Labour, have reason to welcome the disarray of the political centre, rumours of its death have been exaggerated'***

The conventional view, following the decisions of Liberal and official SDP conferences, is of a coming struggle for control of the centre ground. In that struggle, the argument is being pressed, Alliance and Owenites are both well-equipped. A long drawn-out war is to be anticipated, with carnage on both sides. The victor may not be known for some time. Meanwhite, both the major parties will be beneficiaries.

This version of the future is appealing to Conservatives and especially to Labour, and it is also the one from which Owen draws comfort. In fact, it does not bear examination. It is far more likely that the new, unstable rocket with its dubious crew will fizzle out on the launching pad, and that the merged party will be able to take off on its own, with little challenge.

In the past, comparisons have been made between Dr Owen and Sir Oswald Mosley, another Labour defector, mainly to emphasise where such people can end up. The parallel has also contained an element of threat. Yet the real point about Mosley is his failure. The story of Mosley's breakaway, which tempted many prominent and honourable people for a time, is an illustration of the basic truth that any political personality who lacks a substantial base is doomed to oblivion.

Owen will not put his people in uniform, or beat up opponents at mass rallies. Unlike Mosley, the mad Keynesian, Owen the social marketeer will remain within the bounds of the parliamentary system. He may even retain enough local admirers to retain his seat (whether Barnes and Cartwright will be as lucky is another matter). But the essential, self-annihilating point is clear. Owenism, like Mosleyism, is not a religion, or doctrine, or ideology, or tradition, and it is linked to no powerful class or regional or national interest. Minor parties have had a hard time in British politics. Single-person parties have always been nipped in the bud.

THOUGH it is clear that infighting has done the Alliance serious electoral harm (MORI's latest opinion poll figure of 12 per cent is the lowest since 1981), this has not been to the advantage of the Owenites, who have yet to record any significant support at all. Owen's boast of 20,000 members can be taken with a pinch of salt, as can his threat to put up candidates in every seat (Mosley promised 400 candidates in 1931, and actually mustered 34). At the first contested by-election, or in the May local polls, Owen will have a marginal effect. In 1991 the continued visibility of the doctor will still be an embarrassment (but only a minor one: with three MPs, the amount of television coverage permitted will be small). But it is also likely that media interest in the experiment will subside as the new merged party takes shape and begins to recover in public esteem, faster — perhaps — than people on the left currently imagine.

In summary then, though the major parties, and especially Labour, have reason to welcome the disarray of the political centre, rumours of its death have been exaggerated. For Labour, time is short. As John Rentoul pointed out last week, Neil Kinnock will only be able to take advantage of the temporary respite if he seizes the initiative. Alliance voters are an amorphous crew, by no means simply to be identified with "moderate" policies. Some of them are available to be led on issues where the government is already isolated, as over the health service. Others might also be attracted if Labour made it clearer than at present that Mrs Thatcher, and not the merged centre party, is the true enemy.

One of Tony Benn's "Eight Anxieties" about Labour's current direction is a suspicion that the real strategy being followed by the leadership may be to prepare the party for "a possible coalition with some merged Liberal-SDP grouping after the next election". Such a coalition would be undesirable, even if it were available. Nevertheless, an acceptance of a central common purpose with the merged party — getting Thatcher out — might be one small step towards achieving that purpose, now that the Owens and Thomases, thankfully, no longer matter. □

See also Sarah Benton, p.14.

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Breathing life into lost youth

Eddie and Sharon — making money together

THE CURRENT Eddie Cochran television advertisement is the fifth in a highly successful campaign by Bartle, Bogle and Hegarty for Levis jeans. The first showed a carefully mocked up late fifties interior, and featured a re-recording of Sam Cooke's "What a Wonderful World"; the second featured Nick Kamen stripping to the strains of "I Heard It Through The Grapevine". The originals of both songs were re-released to become big pop hits in 1986 and Nick Kamen became a temporary pop star.

The second pair of Levis ads made Ben E. King's "Stand By Me" and Percy Sledge's "When A Man Loves A Woman" big hits: numbers 1 and 2 in the pop charts early in 1987. Other recent pop/ad tie-ins include Renault/Cream "I Feel Free", Pretty Polly/Doris Day "Move Over Darling" and Britvic/Dusty Springfield "I Only Want To Be With You". In each case the records are released with the name of the product being advertised on the cover, acknowledging advertising's importance in dictating back-catalogue exploitation.

The Britvic campaign went one further than previous campaigns, featuring actual sixties pop stars like Eric Burdon. The "integrated circuit" of the pop, TV, film and advertising industries has been plundering pop history ever since the early eighties, but this was a new note of detailed "realism".

The Eddie Cochran ad, cut to the strains of "Something Else" (re-released this week by EMI with an album to follow: "This year is Eddie Cochran year") takes this process one step further, and dramatises an actual situation: Sharon Sheeley's account, taken from BBC2's *Arena*, of how she and Eddie first met. It's basically a telescoped biopic.

As last year's *La Bamba* showed, biopics of dead pop stars sell cinema tickets, records, and a lifestyle. In this communion of the media industries, dead people are desirable because (1) they don't ask for more money and (2) they remain forever young and sexy. Ever since the death of the still ubiquitous James Dean, dead stars have symbolised the extravagances of adolescent self-pity; today, like Michael Jackson in his oxygen tent, they are brought out of the suspended animation of film and photography to prop up a baby-boomers' view of youth that can only be artificially supported.

Like Frankenstein's monster, a new Eddie Cochran is patched together. The historical scene — from "New York. New Year's Eve, 1958": a lost age of pop innocence — is brought up to date: "Sheeley", who lisped in real life, now speaks with spurious intimacy while "Cochran" looks exactly like current teen sensation Rick Astley. Correct targetting. But then, Eddie and Sharon (left, in 1959) looked just like today's teens.

Yet the ad's central storyline is blurred: despite the fact, for instance, that Sheeley is behaving exactly like a groupie, she's dressed for school. The issue of sex is fudged. This "virginal" innocence is faked; it has more to do with other current discourses in condom or Aids ads which together form a link between sex, virginity, youth and death that is a feature of Youth Culture's current necrosis.

Jon Savage

Secret Society police ring go for trial

THREE POLICE OFFICERS and five private detectives were committed for trial at the Old Bailey last week, charged with running conspiracies to break Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act, and with related corruption offences. The prosecution explained to the court that charges had resulted from a BBC2/*New Statesman* Secret Society series, concerning access to confidential police files by private detectives.

The court was told that *Secret Society* had approached a Basingstoke private investigator in the summer of 1986, and invited him to investigate a number of individuals. He was later secretly filmed and recorded handing over information allegedly obtained from files held at the Police National Computer. The investigator, Steven Bartlett of "International Investigations", thought he was dealing with a respectable Glasgow-based management consultancy company. In fact it was a front organisation for BBC Scotland.

Subsequent investigations by Hampshire Constabulary led to the arrest of senior police sergeant Brian Piggott,the officer in charge of a Birmingham area police station. In committal proceedings at Winchester magistrates' court, the prosecution claimed that Piggott was Bartlett's source of illicit police information. Another private detective, Philip Cunning-Mannix, was said to act as an intermediary.

And the Hampshire police team was claimed last week to have uncovered a network of corruption, which tapped information on the Police National Computer. This led to three other private investigators and their police contacts being arrested and charged with conspiracy. One of the investigators had shredded the notebook in which he recorded his unauthorised "checks". But police found the shredded notebook under his car seat, and painstakingly reassembled the pieces to uncover further details of the alleged conspiracy.

Another of the arrested private investigators, it was implied in court, had also been forewarned about the enquiry. All of his office files were missing when Hampshire police raided. But the prosecution claimed that he had probably procured between 75 and 100 unauthorised checks during the period of the conspiracy. His police contact, PC Royston Jones, has now resigned from the police force.

The eight men are expected to go on trial at the Old Bailey later this year.

Duncan Campbell

If the caption fits

No 53

It has come to our attention that we've done nothing on the Bicentenary in the cap comp so far. So herewith Princess D. and three Aussie hunks — and no jokes about boomerangs please! Entries to be in by Monday 15 February on a postcard please. Ten-pound book-token for the winner.

No 51: Winner

Neil Kinnock: "I didn't come here to be ridiculed about the deputy leadership." John Prescott: "Why, where do you usually go?" (*Garry Crowther, Bristol.*) Runners-up: Prescott: "Know any American politicians who could use some unwanted campaign speeches?" (*John Bull, Stockport*); Prescott: "Neil, do we have to suffer that rose on top of your head at *every* press conference?" (*Robert Pugh, Stourbridge.*)

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Abolitionism

FOR ONCE, Tebbit's got it right. His campaign with Michael Heseltine to abolish the Inner London Education Authority outright rather than let it die through a series of withdrawals by individual boroughs will be welcomed by London's parents and, privately, by ILEA councillors.

The advantage for parents is that the change will be much more clear cut with no danger of being left with a poverty-stricken rump. For ILEA, which has already beaten off two attempts to dismember it, fighting against outright abolition will be much easier than campaigning against the more nebulous borough opt-out plans.

Education secretary Kenneth Baker knows this and that's why the borough opt-out scheme was dreamed up in the first place. The likely result, therefore, is going to be a compromise, replacing ILEA with several joint boards or linking pairs of boroughs into education authorities.

ILEA faces a more immediate problem: next year's budget. Baker is demanding a cut of £129 million, or nearly 12 per cent. ILEA claims (a) that this would result in the loss of 9,000 of its 58,000 jobs and (b) that this time it is not crying wolf. Its finance director has warned that there is no more scope for creative accounting. Even Baker seems to believe that there is a real crisis since he sanctioned a series of meetings between his officials and ILEA officers before making a final decision.

There is more bad news for ILEA's parents and children. Last week's departure of chief officer Bill Stubbs will leave the authority rudderless during its death throes, although there has been criticism of Stubbs' managerial abilities.

With all this pressure, it isn't surprising that one ILEA councillor, Lincoln Crawford, suggested that the Labour group should go into majority opposition. Shadow education minister Jack Straw came across the water to head off any such thoughts with a pep talk to the ILEA Labour councillors. What price a handful of ILEA resignations?

Christian Wolmar

Charting the left — from the inside

THE BEST THING about *Chartist*, the magazine sponsored by the soft-left Labour Co-ordinating Committee, is its "Inside Left" diary page. The February/March issue tells of a Labour Party member in the Midlands who visited a local ironmongers proudly displaying his "If the Tories had a soul they'd sell it" badge. The shopkeeper, having eyed the badge suspiciously, was not won over. "If Labour had a soul," he responded, "they'd give it away."

"Inside Left" also reports this gem from a briefing paper produced by the Inner London Education Authority branch of the local government officers' union, NALGO. "Whilst it is true that Labour lost two MPs in Battersea and Fulham," the document comments, surveying the prospects of mobilising London to defend ILEA, "the Tories have no real base of support in many areas and can command little more support than a fringe political party."

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POLITICAL SKETCH

Busy saying nothing

Edward Pearce

THERE ARE lots of things you don't actually manage to debate in the Commons. They get a mention, rather like an "In Memoriam" notice, posted in the press in the form of Standing Order 20 (formerly SO10, formerly SO9). This is the mechanism by which a backbencher gets a free kite-fly, nominally requesting an emergency debate but only ever getting one when the whips have signalled assent in advance.

So Kevin Macnamara raised the Stalker episode; Tony Benn did his bit about the pit deputies strike; and Chris Mullin annoyed certain Conservatives by alluding to "six innocent men". All three applied for emergency debates in an expectation more sure and certain than anything about resurrection in the prayerbook, that they would, with grave courtesy, be turned down. The SO20 has long been a species of therapy. And therapy along with ritual sometimes seems to be the substantive part of the Commons's business.

Certainly, it applies to the operation of the guillotine on the Education Bill. Devised by Gladstone as a means to enable business to proceed over Irish filibusters, the guillotine has strengthened the hands of whips and executives across the years. There is nothing particularly Tory about the device, though as this government yellows with the occupancy of office, it may come to be heavily associated with it. Above all argument about excess, oppression, tyranny and whatever lingers the beloved figure of Michael Foot who once in a fit of enthusiasm put through five timetable motions in one day. Labour was in fact notably despotic in its use of procedure for legislative ends, bringing out in a man whom we all look upon rightly as a sort of slimline Mr Pickwick, a fascinating hint of Scarpia.

Accordingly, indignation on these occasions is usually synthetic. Mr Wakeham, for the government, is something less than Cicero; his habit of reading a brief as if it were a two-week-old list of the Vauxhall League football results is endearing. It was a bill "to benefit pupils, teachers and parents alike and deserved credit for its positive and comprehensive approach. This is the stuff of which wildernesses are made. You would listen to Mr Wakeham for flair the way you would go mountaineering in Norfolk. Except that there was one little hillock of uncertainty made visible after enquiry by the affable desperado, Tony Banks. "What," said Mr Banks, interrupting a bagpipe drone about the manifesto, "about the bit which *wasn't* in the manifesto — the abolition of ILEA?"

This, of course, as we know, is another sort of kite, one flown by Mr Heseltine and Mr Tebbit, the spare chromosomes of the Tory physiology by way of an early day motion. Are they being put up to it? Are they trying it out for internal electoral purposes, or just having wicked fun? Mr Wakeham's reply to the Banks request for a statement on ILEA could have been fairly paraphrased as, "Can't say when. Maybe never" — an interesting example, to put beside the health service exercise, of facing six ways and pursuing them all, of executive indecision.

ALL OF THIS came far too late for Frank Dobson who had already written his speech. If Wakeham's remarks mean anything, they contain a fairly heavy hint that the liquidation of the people's joy and delight, the Inner London Education Authority, has at least been postponed. But dear old Frank, and he is one of nature's dear old Franks, had prepared himself for a London Labour MP's statutory defence of the authority.

Mr Dobson, taking the view that nothing can be done about timetabling anyway, decided to use the time made available for a sort of rhapsody on the ILEA, on the enlightenment of a better age which had permitted 19 days leisurely debate on the eve of the Normandy landings, and a lament for all that was best and most noble in our heritage, whatever the case which may be made for ILEA — which in the days before Neil Fletcher did give a fair impression of cultivating a banana plantation — one had never quite seen it as the moral equivalent of a stately home, a sort of educational variant of Blandings.

"Changes," said Sir Frank, "as Conservatives *used* to know, cost money." Don't want any of that dangerous innovation here. It was an amiable, meandering, reminiscent, irrelevant and rather nominal speech. And for the record, Dr Guillotine, inventor of the celebrated aid to the terror, did *not* perish at the blade of his own infernal machine. Persons engaging in education debates should avoid making small but ascertainable errors in history.

Mr Biffen was delightfully back for this debate, describing himself as one "flushed from the usual channels" (Commons jargon for the consultations between floor leaders and whips). He was in the now startling position of speaking with some sympathy about a government measure. But he managed, as usual, to say something relevant. If we don't take the committee stage seriously and regard it as protest therapy for the opposition and strong, decisive, incoherent action by the government, we shall get an act so ill-drafted that its fragility will be tested in the courts, and so peremptory that all hope of amendment will lie with the Lords. None of which does too much for the reputation of the Commons.

This was also the broad view of Mr Ashdown on show for the Iowa Caucus of the new Interminable Party and its leadership elections. Nothing Mr Ashdown merely says will improve upon the crinkly, breakfast-free masculinity of the way he looks, a sort of hired perfection compelled to make a middle-of-the-road, decently adequate speech. Like indignation at guillotine motions, Mr Ashdown looks like a triumph of the synthesiser's art. That was, alas, a fair definition of the day's proceedings.

It would be unthinkable to allot time to debate instead the recent conclusions of the judiciary or the activities of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Someone might say something. □

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Mystery mistake or BBC burglary?

LABOUR CAMPAIGNER Tam Dalyell MP has challenged the government and Strathclyde police to explain a mysterious error in the police search warrants for the raid on BBC Scotland a year ago. The error could mean that the BBC Scotland offices were covertly searched several weeks before the row over the Zircon programme began.

The mystery is how police search warrants — which identified presenter Duncan Campbell's Glasgow flat as well as the BBC offices — gave the wrong name for Campbell's landlady. The same mistake had been made only once before: on a note held inside BBC Scotland offices. But although this note was later seized by police, they did not officially see it until two days after they had made the mistake. The obvious question was whether the police had themselves made the identical mistake as a direct result of having obtained information from an earlier, covert, search of the *Secret Society* production offices at BBC Scotland.

The police warrant referred to a house owned by Wilma Paterson, but spelt her name "Pattison", a much more unusual name. The same error had been made by Campbell when first advising BBC staff of his Glasgow whereabouts. Ms Paterson says that no one else had ever made this mistake in spelling her name.

A possible covert entry to the BBC *Secret Society* offices had taken place two days before Christmas 1986, and several weeks before the Zircon row became public. But the intelligence services had by this time become alarmed about the programme, and intense pressure was then being applied to BBC Director General Alisdair Milne to have the programme banned.

In Glasgow during the evening of 23 December, while BBC Scotland held its Christmas party, someone entered the locked *Secret Society* offices, removed a video recorder, videotapes of *Secret Society* programme material, and personal papers belonging to the series' director. Although the theft could have been an "ordinary" burglary, the thief had managed to unlock and relock a relatively high security lock on the *Secret Society* door, while ignoring the pickings of more than a dozen other video recorders which could have been taken from other, unlocked offices in the same corridor. Other valuable items were not taken.

Tam Dalyell, who spoke last weekend at a Scottish Council for Civil Liberties' conference in Glasgow, highlighted the strange spelling error as one among many discrepancies in an official report on the Scottish Zircon raids, which was issued last week by Strathclyde police. Another discrepancy was that between the shorthand notes taken at the time by a senior member of BBC Scotland, and the tone of the police report. When Strathclyde police insisted on searching the BBC despite a warning (later confirmed by a Scottish judge) that their warrant was illegal, the police say that "the officers informed the BBC that the warrant was legal".

What they actually said was "It has been discussed at the highest level and we are going to enforce it. There will be a full and vigorous investigation". "The legality" of the search, Detective Chief Inspector Stewart of Strathclyde police told the BBC, "can be gone into at a later date". ●

Nothing in it

AT LABOUR'S campaign strategy meeting last week, the first "Labour Listens" event at Brighton came up for discussion, though in somewhat desultory fashion. Roy Hattersley, one of the "Listening" panel, reported that there was "nothing in it" while Peter Mandelson, the party's public relations director, accounted it a success as a "media item" (it had got onto the main news bulletins). If "Labour Listens" is to be saved from the right's indifference and the pragmatists who regard it merely as a good public relations wheeze, then somebody is going to have to introduce some substance into the exercise. For a start, they might question the chances of hearing something from a representative range of the British people if they invite them to speak at large gatherings in forbidding centres with the restrictions of a fixed agenda. ●

West Enders
RADICAL NEW DEVELOPMENT: — NHS SOLD TO US INSURANCE GIANT
RADICAL NEW IDEA - DESERVING POOR TO WEAR COMPUTER TAGS
NEW RADICAL POLL TAX ON DOWN+OUTS SURPRISE
Today
FAR-REACHING NEW RADICAL SEVENPLUS FEE-PAYING PROMISE
Maxwell
GREAT NEW LABOUR OPPOSITION INITIATIVE
WHAT'S THE TIME?
WHERE ARE WE?
HOW'S THE WEATHER?
DO YOU OWN A FRONT-LOADING AUTOMATIC WASHING MACHINE?
Labour listens
HOW MANY BEANS MAKE FIVE?
HOW SOON CAN WE DITCH CLAUSE IV?
WHEN'S LUNCHTIME?
I'D LIKE THE LABOUR PARTY TO KNOW THAT I'VE GOT A REALLY QUITE REMARKABLY SEVERE VERBAL INCONTINENCE PROBLEM, AND FURTHERMORE...
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A VIEW FROM THE WEST

Nicaragua: the bully's miserable ally

In the first of his fortnightly despatches,* ALEXANDER COCKBURN *lays into the tame American press and its support for Reagan's war against the Nicaraguan government

Los Angeles

THE SUNDAY before Christmas the *contra* attacked three towns in the mining region of northeastern Nicaragua. By the end of the day *contra* radio was announcing that Rosita, Bonanza and Siuna had been "taken". The martial vainglory that poured from the radio transmitting station had little to do with the realities of the great assault. The *contra* had stayed in Rosita for about five hours, Siuna for twelve and Bonanza for thirty. The consequence of their presence was, as usual, a large number of civilian casualties. Little Kenia Rodriguez lost both her feet, along with her grandmother who died from a salvo as she huddled over Kenia. This was in Siuna, where 30 civilians had sheltered in a 4-foot concrete pipe into which a *contra* emptied his machine gun, killing four children and seven adults, and seriously wounding ten more.

Why the attack, which also cost the *contra* over a hundred casualties? These mining towns are strongly pro-Sandinista, in a thinly populated and scarcely defended region. The real target of the raids was a few thousand miles to the north, in the form of the paymasters of the *contra*, the Reagan administration and the US Congress. Phyllis Oakley at the State Department duly called the attacks a "one hundred per cent success" and wavering Congress persons were fortified by a dispatch of one of the *New York Times*' correspondents in Central America announcing that the *contra* had launched their "largest and most successful military operation of the war".

A week earlier the Reagan administration had trotted out Major Miranda, the latest in a line of Nicaraguan defectors mustered every time the Congress ponders how much to give the *contra*. Headlines in the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* duly announced that the Nicaraguans were planning an army of 600,000 and would be getting "sophisticated" MIG 21s from the Soviet Union. Other revelations attributed to Miranda included a planned Nicaraguan attack on Costa Rica and Honduras. The stories added that Nicaragua's defence minister, Umberto Ortega, had confirmed Miranda's most serious allegations.

He had done nothing of the sort, and Miranda's allegations were far from serious. The stories should have been headlined "Nicaragua plans to reduce standing army", since both Miranda and Ortega said that the regular forces might shrink from 80,000 to 70,000 by 1990, with a corresponding rise in the reserves and militia. There was no evidence from Miranda that the MIGs (fifties in vintage and therefore of somewhat whiskered sophistication) were anything more than part of a normal Nicaraguan wish list ignored by the Soviets. Umberto Ortega never mentioned them in his speech despite a fierce *Washington Post* editorial asserting the contrary.

It is surely no consolation to Kenia Rodriguez as she hobbles through life on her wooden stumps, but the attacks in Zelaya province and the production of Miranda were all part of the business of getting another *contra* aid package through Congress, a process that has been going on regularly for five years and has been rising to its usual crisis this week. Aside from the defector and that attack, designed to slake Congress's eagerness to have the *contra* "hold a town", normal ingredients include expressions of tremendous Congressional resolve to finish off the *contra*, which finally expire in a compromise whereby "non-lethal" or "humanitarian" aid makes its way to the *contra* in CIA planes, in which such provender sits one side of the aisle and the mines, machine guns and associated materiel on the other.

Guatemala Accords

Whether or not Congress approves any form of aid to the *contra* has little immediate practical impact in Nicaraguans. An index of the relative insignificance of what Congress may or may not decree is that in the months immediately following the Contragate scandal, about illegal aid to the *contra* as well as the diversion of funds from Iran arms deals, this same aid reached the *contra* in increased quantities, and in the months since the Guatemala Accords, aka the "Arias plan", were signed on 7 August, this same US aid has increased again, to the level of one airdrop a day; mostly in areas where the Sandinista government had announced a unilateral ceasefire.

This points us towards another irrelevance, namely the impact of the Guatemala Accords on the Reagan administration's resolve to finish off the Sandinistas, forcefully expressed on many occasions such as Under Secretary of State Elliott Abrams' declaration on 22 October that the US will "never accept a Soviet satellite in Central America". Neither Abrams nor the official, state-influenced, US press found any contradiction between this announcement (or the daily supply flights) and expressions by the US of support for the famous Accords, which expressly call for an end to the supply flights and kindred aid to "insurgencies". Another indication of the actual posture of Reagan and his men towards the threat of peace was the $3,000-a-month bribes offered by the CIA, shortly after the Accords were signed, to 14 Miskito Indian leaders to induce them to maintain the military conflict.

Reaganite bullying

The essence of the Guatemala Accords was the notion of simultaneity, whereby the five co-signatories would jointly promote internal reconciliation, democratic procedures, freedom of expression and so forth. El Salvador amnestied its death squads who thus felt morally fortified to wait by Mariona prison to slaughter such political prisoners as might also be amnestied. Guatemala announced proudly it had no political prisoners, a truthful statement since the army tortures its captives, and then murders them. Honduras announced at once that it would not observe the Accords at all, refusing even to concede the existence of *contra* camps. None of this aroused much interest in the US press, which was busy urging Nicaragua to "comply" with two demands that in fact were not in the Accords at all, namely blanket amnesty and direct talks with the *contra*.

This macabre process culminated in the summit in Costa Rica over the weekend of 15 January. Prime focus of Reaganite arm twisting was the International Commission on Verification and Follow-Up (CIVS). This was the body charged with the task of monitoring compliance with the Accords. Since it was independent it was therefore much detested by the Reagan administration, which successfully bullied Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica into finishing it off, arrogating the onerous task of monitoring compliances to the presidents themselves. With its final gasp the Commission issued a unanimous report which stated clearly enough that:

> the government of the United States of America maintains its policy and practice of providing assistance, military in particular, to the irregular forces operating against the government of Nicaragua. The definitive cessation of this assistance continues to be an indispensable requirement for the success of the peace efforts . . .

The possibility that the Reagan administration might be embarrassed by this unequivocal judgement was vitiated by the *New York Times* correspondent, James LeMoyne, who reported simply and falsely that "A meeting of the verification commission ended last weekend with little agreement." Only readers of the *Christian Science Monitor* had the opportunity, by way of the report of Peter Ford, to find out what had actually happened.

All in all, the US mainstream press has performed miserably at a moment when vigilant reporting might has forced the Reagan administration to take the Accords seriously.

This last Sunday the *New York Times*, whose reporters have been furnishing glowing accounts of *contra* gentility and prowess over the past six months, called in its main editorial for the congressional vote on aid to be postponed, since the mere threat to continue aid was putting "constructive pressure" on the Nicaraguan government. Someone should translate this and keep it for Kenia to read when she is older.

Someone should also keep for Kenia the poll, run without comment by the *New York Times* that same day which showed that 58 per cent of all Americans oppose *contra* aid and 30 per cent approve it. But then, aside from the week after Oliver North testified in Congress last summer, a majority of Americans have always opposed *contra* aid, showing that they quite rightly don't believe everything they read in their papers or hear from their commander-in-chief. □

Alexander Cockburn was the New Statesman's *US correspondent in the mid-1970s, and now writes for the* Wall Street Journal *and the "Beat the Devil" column in the* Nation. *A collection of his writings in the Reagan era,* Corruptions of Empire, *has just been published by Verso, £14.95.*

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Come forward, tell the truth, and be maligned

PAUL FOOT *reports on the new evidence so casually dismissed by the Appeal Court judges in their decision last week to keep the Birmingham Six in jail for life, starting with the witness who changed her testimony*

MRS JOYCE LYNASS, a young mother who works part-time for the local church, was watching a television programme with her husband one weekend last November. The subject was bullying in the army, and the programme ended with an appeal to all those who knew of or who had suffered from such bullying to come forward and tell the authorities. The programme urged its audience against the easy course — keeping quiet. It was important for the army and for society that the truth should come out. Above all, those who did so could rely upon the sympathy and protection of the authorities.

The programme greatly disturbed Mrs Lynass. Late into the night, she and her husband discussed her predicament. The previous day — a Friday — she had given evidence at the Court of Appeal in the case of the six men convicted in 1975 of blowing up two Birmingham pubs, killing 21 and injuring 160. New evidence in the case, and independent public doubt about the convictions had persuaded the Home Secretary to refer the case back to the Court of Appeal.

Mrs Lynass had not given evidence at the original trial. She was called to the appeal because she had given a statement to the Devon and Cornwall police, who had carried out a secret inquiry into the police treatment of the six men after their arrests. She had, she said, been a police cadet in 1974, and was on duty at Queens Road police station, Birmingham, on the weekend the six prisoners were brought there.

She had told the Devon and Cornwall police of the unsteadiness of the men when they had been moved from the police station after a night in the cells. She repeated this at the Court of Appeal. She was asked specifically whether she had seen any assault or ill-treatment of the men by the police, and answered that she had not.

Her problem, she told her husband, was that the evidence was false. Partly because she had been put off by a sinister comment from a Birmingham police officer ("remember, we all have families"), partly because she did not want to get involved in public controversy, she had not revealed that she *had* seen a brutal assault by an investigating police officer on one of the six men.

The television appeal about army bullying disturbed her. Should she have told the whole truth? Was it too late to make amends? The easy course was to do nothing. That way, nothing would ever be heard of the Lynasses again. That is the course which the vast majority of people in Mrs Lynass's position would have taken. Anyone with the remotest experience of trying to overturn a suspect jury verdict knows that most witnesses, even if they are confronted with proof that they have something new and important to say for the defendants, are reluctant to "get involved". To her considerable credit, Joyce Lynass decided to set the record straight.

The following morning, entirely on her own initiative and without discussing the matter with anyone else, Mrs Lynass contacted the appellant's lawyers. On the Sunday she was in London, making a statement. On the Monday, she was in the witness box.

She had perjured herself

Nervous, but determined, she said she had gone into one of the interviewing rooms at Queens Road police station on the weekend after the men were brought in. As the door opened, she said, she saw one of her police colleagues knee the prisoner in the groin, remarking: "That's what we do to fucking murderous bastards".

Most observers in court that day were impressed by Joyce Lynass's courage and credibility. She had perjured herself, it was true, but here she was, in the interests of justice and for no other conceivable reason, putting that right.

Moreover, her testimony fitted the statements at the trial of all six men who said they had been systematically attacked at Queens Road — and that beating, kneeing or grabbing their testicles was the form of assault most favoured by the police officers.

> ***"The judges' conclusion was plain. There had been no violence. The police had behaved impeccably. The confessions were all voluntary"***

What protection and encouragement has she had from Britain's most senior judges? In their judgement last week, they announced that they didn't believe a word she said. If they had to believe any version of her story, they believed the first one which did not specify any violence. But they did not believe her at all. They offered no explanation for her change of heart save the darkest hint: "We shall never know what happened that weekend." Joyce Lynass, a woman without a blemish on her record, was blackened for life.

Joyce Lynass gave fresh evidence on the first of the two crucial issues before the court: the allegation, made by all six men at their trial, that they had been beaten and tortured after their arrest, and that the beatings and torture had extracted confessions from four of them.

As a result of the inquiry by Devon and Cornwall police, the defence was able to produce a number of other new witnesses all of whom testified (as no independent witness had testified at the men's trial) to injuries the men sustained before they were taken to Winson Green prison where they were beaten up again.

Former Constable Tom Clarke, who was on duty at Queens Road, said he had seen injuries on the men's faces and bodies. He said that police had aimed guns at the prisoners in the cells. He said that a dog had been used in the cells. These last two points fitted closely (though not in exact detail — Mr Clarke was remembering events 13 years ago) with the men's allegations that they had been threatened with guns; and that one of them, as soon as he admitted his phobia for dogs, was confronted in his cell with a snarling, snapping Alsatian. Former Sergeant Garrington remembered seeing the men lined up as though for punishment — scared and injured. PC Paul Berry, a serving police officer, remembered seeing one of the men with a cut lip and black eye. Former prison officer Peter Bourne gave evidence about the documents which committed the men to prison. They had not been properly filled out, he said, and did not disclose, as they should have done, the physical condition of the prisoners. Another officer, Brian Sharp, said he was the first to see the six men naked in the prison. He saw fresh injuries on their faces and old injuries on their bodies.

All this new evidence was coolly dismissed by the judges. Clarke was, they said, "an unconvincing witness". He had been found guilty of stealing £5 from a prisoner and sacked from the police. He was therefore "embittered" and had made up his evidence out of revenge. Berry's evidence, said the judges, "doesn't help the appeal" — apparently because there was no other evidence that the man he saw had a cut lip. Of former Sergeant Garrington, the judges said: "The kindest explanation is that his memory was playing him tricks." Of Peter Bourne: "His evidence was characterised by a refusal to admit that the men had been subjected to a violent attack in the prison". The same allegation was made against Brian Sharp. "We are not surprised that Sharp was not called at the trial," said the judgement. "We did not believe him."

The conclusion was plain. There had been no violence. The police had behaved impeccably. The confessions were all voluntary.

How did the six men come to be suspected of the bombings in the first place? They were arrested as they sought to leave Britain for Ireland on the night the bombs went off. They were held in

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Morecambe police station, where their hands were tested for explosives. The chemical test used was the "Griess test". The man who tested them was Dr Frank Skuse, a forensic scientist at the Home Office laboratory at Chorley, Lancs.

Skuse got positive results for nitroglycerine on two of the hands of the men he tested at Morecambe police station. Neither of these two "positives" was confirmed by more sophisticated tests he carried out later in his laboratory. All his samples produced "negatives" on "thin layer chromatography" tests. Only one test on the ultra-sensitive Gas Chromatography/Mass Spectrometry (GCMS) showed any reaction at all — and that so small that it was described by another Home Office scientist as only "possibly" positive.

In 1985, Granada's *World in Action* commissioned two scientists to carry out Griess tests with exactly the same ingredients which, the Home Office assured them, had been used by Skuse at Morecambe. The tests showed "positives" on a wide range of substances, including playing cards (the men had been playing cards in the train) lacquer such as that on a train table, cigarette packets and cigarettes (the men had been smoking). It seemed that the main evidence had been smashed — until Dr Skuse announced that he had used a *different* concentration of caustic soda in his tests — different, that is, from the concentration which his own Home Office chief had said he had used.

The cross-examination of Dr Skuse over four days by Michael Mansfield QC was an astonishing experience for anyone lucky enough to be in court. Skuse started by admitting he had left his Home Office post a few days after the Granada programme — though he did not agree that he had been threatened with the sack for incompetence.

He could produce no notes of the ingredients of his tests at Morecambe. Again and again he contradicted what he had said at the trial; seemed vague about figures he had been specific about previously; and at one point admitted being wrong *by a factor of 100*. For Dr Skuse, however, the three judges had nothing but understanding and patience. Dr Skuse, they were sure, was sincere. He couldn't be expected to remember details after such a long period of time.

The one reliable test

On the main point, however, they were obliged to disagree with him. In perhaps the most remarkable sentence in the whole judgement, Lord Lane said: "The Griess test is not specific for nitroglycerine."

If indeed it is not, the six men should never have been considered suspects in the first place. The tests should not have been made on the men at Morecambe, and there would have been nothing else to connect them to the crime. Lord Lane concluded, however: "Nothing from the mass of new scientific evidence which the appeal has heard has caused us to doubt that one or more of the appellants had explosives on their hands."

How could he reach that conclusion? The Griess test, he said, could be excluded. So could the tests which were made with ammonium nitrate. These were demonstrably not specific for nitroglycerine, but could have proved "positive" from a wide variety of different substances, including urine.

There remained the single "possibly" positive test on the ultra-sensitive GCMS machine at Aldermaston. To testify to this, another new witness was produced by the Crown — Dr Janet Drayton. She agreed she had written that the test on one of the men's hands was "possibly" positive for nitroglycerine. Why? Because the line on the print-out from the machine had shown a "peak" at the right time.

Where was the proof of this? How big was the alleged "peak"? Dr Drayton could not say — the print-out had been "mislaid". She could only assert, without documentary evidence, that the time was right. Dr Skuse had said in evidence that while he and Dr Drayton were doing the test, she had used a large stopwatch. Dr Drayton said emphatically that she had not used a watch. From this single shred of uncorroborated evidence, the judges were able to conclude: "Nothing had caused us to doubt one or more of the appellants had explosives on their hands."

Lastly, Lord Lane addressed the awkward question: *why* had none of the positive Griess tests been confirmed on the GCMS test, which is at least a hundred times more sensitive? "Nitroglycerine is volatile," he said, "and it could have evaporated or deteriorated". Yet an independent scientist, Dr David Baldock, had carried out extensive tests leaving quantities of nitroglycerine of the order it was suggested had been found on the men's hands in bowls above a radiator for days on end. In none of them had the nitroglycerine evaporated or deteriorated to anything like the extent necessary

Cont'd on p.34

"It's got all the hallmarks of an IRA bombing. A carefully orchestrated upsurge of anti-Irish public opinion, hysterical press and TV over-reaction and the fact that we can't think of anyone else, right now."

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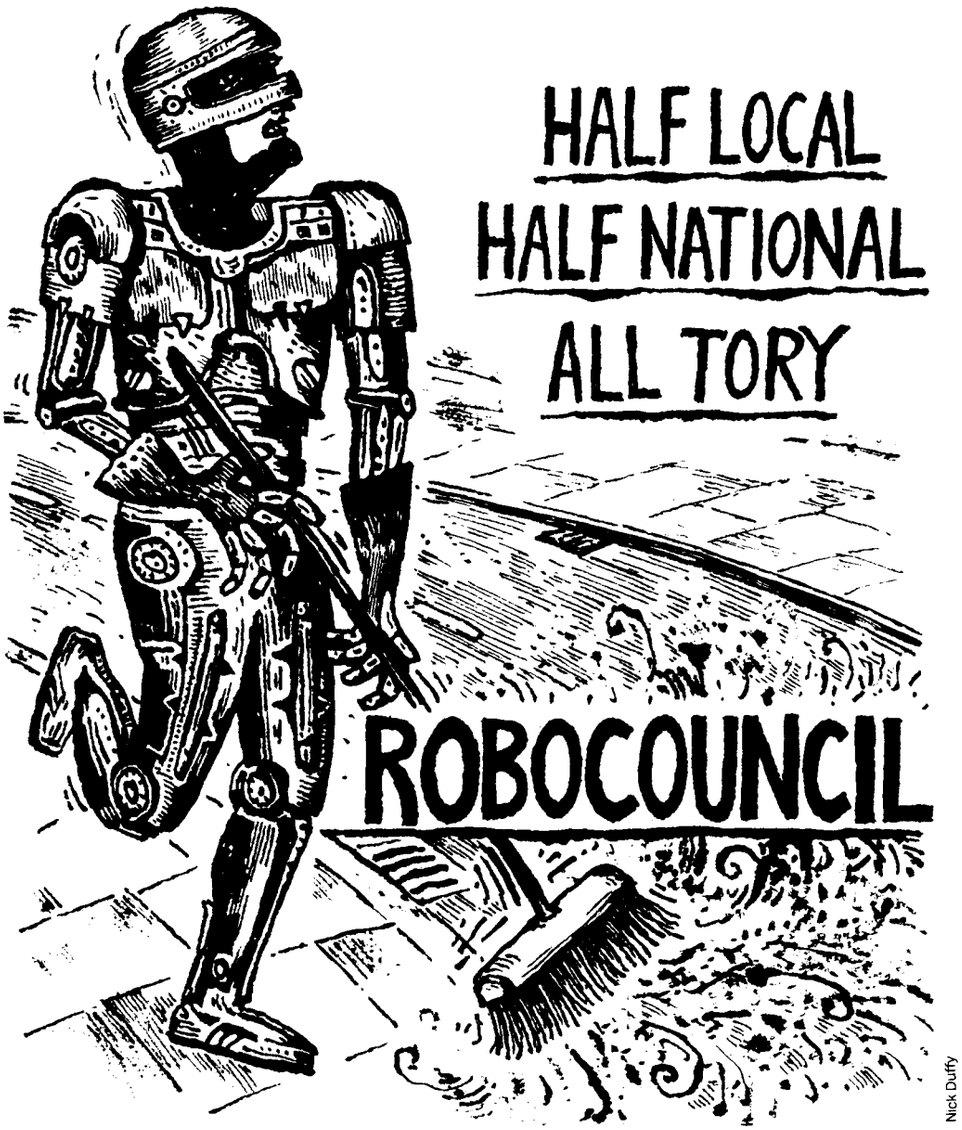

Nick Duffy

No politics—we're on the council

Labour hasn't yet woken up to the profound changes that the poll tax and new business rate will bring.

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR ***warns that their effect will be to de-politicise local government. Is anyone listening?***

THE LABOUR leadership may be listening but it's in no mood to look and learn. All the top men, from Neil Kinnock to Jeff Rooker, were at Labour's local government conference in Edinburgh last weekend to lay down the line. Their speeches were peppered with dark warnings about the dangers of illegality and defiance (Kinnock), and words of encouragement to Labour councillors to soldier on under siege from the government (Hattersley).

In fact, on reflection, they weren't even listening. So disciplined is the new model Labour party that hardly a soul even articulated the heretical thoughts that the leadership had come to quash. Partly, that was because the platform consisted entirely of national politicians and trade unionists. Even senior local government figures were allowed only their four minutes' worth from the rostrum.

The debates were entirely within the parameters set by the leadership, chaired, incidentally, by the chairman of the NEC, Neil himself. ("It's a bit unusual to have the chairman and the leader as the same person," he joked, "But it saves on train fares.") There were countless routine condemnations of the Tory plans, but no attempt to take the debate further. As a result, the key issue which will face Labour locally as the poll tax, the unified business rate and compulsory tendering emerge from parliament was not discussed: whether Labour can or should stay in local government.

That question — *not* a debate over whether Labour authorities should defy the poll tax legislation — is the fundamental dilemma that all Labour councillors in power will face within the next couple of years. Defiance is a logical nonsense, suffering from the same internal contradictions as the tactic of refusing to set a rate during the rate-capping campaign. If Labour is to advocate defiance of the tax, either through not establishing the register, or through a "don't pay" campaign, it can only do so when it is not in control of the town hall. Such a campaign will lead to an immediate financial crisis of the scale of current crises in Camden, Haringey, Manchester and other rate-capped councils (see box).

Oddly, the only people at the conference ready to analyse this problem were not the left, but "moderate" councillors like Patricia Hollis, leader of Norwich, who pointed out that the role of Labour councillors after poll tax will be so constrained that there will have to be a reappraisal of their role.

The debate about the poll tax has so far centred on the regressive nature of the tax, accompanied by detailed tables about who will gain and who will lose. (Incidentally, it was Rhodes Boyson, then a junior DOE minister, who ordered the publication of the first "exemplifications" on how much people in each local authority area will pay, a decision that cost him his job.) These tables are barely worth the paper they are printed on. They are based on the ludicruous assumption that the tax will be fully collected — which it won't.

Far more important than the effect on individual residents of the poll tax and unified business rate is their consequences for the people who run local government. Most people will lose or gain relatively trivial amounts through the poll tax, despite all the hoo-hah being made by opponents of the poll tax about the size of these changes. But the combined effect of the poll tax and business rate will be to turn local government into local administration. They will make local *politics* a thing of the past. Councils will be mere instruments of central government, like the health authorities.

The importance of central government setting the level nationally of a unified business rate has been underplayed. The government will set the rate, not on the basis of the amount of business premises in any council's area, but on a per capita basis. Thus, in future, for every £1 spent by local councils, 75p will come from central government, through grants or the unified business rate. Therefore, to raise an extra 1 per cent of revenue, a council will have to raise its poll tax by 4 per cent. Moreover, since the poll tax is regressive, people who can least afford it would have to pay more for the services they're being provided with. In other words, if you're raising the poll tax to pay for more home helps, you may as well tell the old ladies to get their own chars instead.

Many councillors at Edinburgh, battered but defiant after eight years of increased centralisation and financial constraints, think that they will be

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able to continue with their pet projects, despite the poll tax, in much the same way as they have done so far. It might be a bit more difficult, they feel, but they will still cope. They are missing the point. The poll tax is a deliberate attempt to remove the redistributive element from local government. Without that, Labour's role is minimal. There is no point in the state providing nurseries or home helps at the same cost as the privatisation.

Michael Howard, the minister charged with implementing the poll tax, knows this. He has talked of bringing back onto councils local worthies who are not tainted by party political labels — in other words, conservatives with a small "c".

The Labour Party must heed the lesson of the fight to save the GLC. Knowing that no one cared about the GLC itself, Ken Livingstone pushed the issue of democracy — of rights being taken away from Londoners. The campaign was so successful that he managed to convince 61 per cent of Londoners. The poll tax has an equally devastating effect on local democracy and throughout the country Labour must begin to put this across.

When Roy Hattersley said at the conference that he understood "why some (councillors) ask if it is worthwhile carrying on", it showed that he knows that this is the real issue. By stifling any debate about it, the leadership merely ensures that thousands of councillors will individually take the decision to leave local politics. The result will be further to weaken the calibre of local councillors — and, over time, officers. The leadership may even be creating the condition for an influx of assorted Trotskyists — not something they would really want.

As one observer, a long-time member of the Communist Party, put it, "We used to have conferences like this a few years ago. We have a word for it — Stalinist." □

The cuts list

	Cut for 1988/89 £million	Cut as a percentage of total budget
Manchester	110	26%
Haringey	19	12%
Camden	44	28%
Brent	35	18%
Ealing	46	25%
Greenwich	25	23%
Islington	3.5-11	3-10%
Lambeth	40	25%
Lewisham	20	14%
Southwark	21	21%
Waltham Forest	30	18%
ILEA	129	12%

Only three councils have made definite decisions on the cuts needed for the next financial year. Manchester's £110 million cut will result in the loss of 4,000 jobs. Haringey will shave off another £19 million from the £15 million lost this year. Camden will shed 2,000 of its 8,700 employees.

The figures for the other councils are only provisional. No doubt they are yet to face creative juggling and restructuring.

Research: Aman Coonar

The days of reckoning

LABOUR'S official agenda at the local government conference ignored the plight of the beleaguered rate-capped councils. The only recognition of the financial crisis for about a dozen Labour councils came in the shape of a small private gathering arranged by David Blunkett. The overriding feeling of the meeting, according to a councillor emerging from it, was one of bewilderment: "We all thought we were going to church, but we ended up in a brothel," he said.

There are brothels and brothels, however. While some hard-pressed authorities — their new name for themselves — are managing to plan their cuts, in others it is difficult to sense any consistent rhythm in the axe blows. The general election result last year forced the defiant Labour councils to their knees. But as late as last September Margaret Hodge, leader of Islington, argued in an interview with the *NS* (18 September) that they could continue to improve services, despite the cuts, by paying greater attention to efficiency and dropping "gesture politics".

Well, the gestures have disappeared. But the aim of improved services at a time of retrenchment has proved more elusive. Indeed, in Camden and Haringey, the cuts are so deep that a sensible strategy which simply protects service levels seems out of reach. Haringey, for example, is cutting £6.3 million from education and £3.3 million from social services; Camden is shedding 2,300 from its 8,754 workforce, and £51 million from its budget. Such levels of cuts, in one year, cannot be achieved without seriously damaging local services — Haringey is losing nearly one in five teaching posts, Camden will have 78 fewer social workers.

There has been so much panic that Camden, which made its first round of cuts last July, may be heading for an *underspend* on its current year's budget. With up to 150 officers leaving every month, the council may underspend again next year. The imposition of a jobs freeze since July has made the reductions in service provision haphazard and arbitrary. To remedy this, the council proposes to impose redeployment on the workforce. Currently, in a scheme negotiated in the days of plenty, workers have to be offered six choices of new job before they can be forcibly redeployed. Camden, in the traditional Labour council style of management by extremes, now wants to change that to one offer.

The chaos in Camden illustrates two points. First, the councillors have lost control over the decision-making process. The plans are drawn up by officers and rubber-stamped by councillors — at one two-hour meeting, £2.5 million was clawed back from over 100 local voluntary groups. Second, nobody is able or willing to give a straight answer to the question of how much really needs to be cut. There is still scope for creative accounting, and discovering small pockets of money. Certainly, some councils are still finding new sources of money. Why Camden and Haringey have not is a mystery.

In Manchester, which is to lose 4,000 of its 40,000 jobs, the approach has been more rational. According to the council leader, Graham Stringer, £110 million has had to be cut from a budget of around £400 million. As in Camden, the process began straight after the general election, but Stringer made sure that the party and unions were won over first.

There have, of course, been cuts — the council is being forced by rate-capping to reduce its rates by 9 per cent. But Stringer claims that both frontline services and the council's equal opportunities initiatives have been preserved: "The number of home helps and meals on wheels will not be reduced, although we will lose some social workers. We're not shutting any libraries, but the art gallery will suffer. Of course, as we'll be taking on less staff, and we still have a higher proportion of white people, equal opportunities will suffer. But on the other hand, the junior black staff we have taken on in the past few years will have greater opportunities for promotion."

Hackney's leader, Andrew Puddephatt, claims that he has been stressing the need to improve service delivery" since he was elected leader nearly two years ago. Now 450 jobs are to go and four out of 14 libraries are to close. The cuts have forced the council into taking a tougher stance with the unions, but there has not been the open warfare that has characterised Camden.

Puddephatt accepts that the municipal left made mistakes when it gained power in many councils in the early eighties. "What we are now trying to do is to prove that Labour can be an effective provider and manager of services, and then develop more radical policies". The days when growth was seen as a panacea for all council problems are over. As a pamphlet published at Labour's Edinburgh conference by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (*Labour Councils in the Cold*, £2.50 from 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG) put it, "Local government has suddenly become a job for grown-ups."

The shameful point for municipal socialists is that it has taken Tory legislation to force them into examining their councils' record as a service provider. Margaret Hodge accepts that these pressures forced her council into making some changes which improve services or make them more efficient. She calculates that in Islington, £800,000 will be saved by having negotiated more efficient working practices and new rotas for the rubbish collectors. "We're also hoping to have them go round at 6pm collecting from shops, rather than letting the rubbish stay out all night and making a mess."

It is unfair, however, to lay all the blame at the door of the left. As a senior Southwark councillor put it in a conference workshop: "It is not our failure to manage these councils over the past four or five years, but the inheritance from past Labour councils — and Tory councils — over the past 20, 30 or 40 years that is at the root of the problems."

Further, the crisis has concentrated the minds of town hall trade unionists. "Agreements which could once have taken years to negotiate, if ever, can now be got through in a matter of months," says one council officer.

The trouble is that it is potential political oblivion which has brought about the concentration of minds.

Christian Wolmar

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DAVID OWEN

'It is a far, far better thing I do . . .'

SARAH BENTON *reports on the SDP merger conference — and the strangely romantic death wish of David Owen*

Sheffield

THIS ISN'T a rally, this is a business meeting, henchman Cartwright told the waiting crowd on Saturday night in Sheffield. Who was he trying to kid? At what business meeting, called to discuss the "nuts and bolts", does the Chairman hover outside the door awaiting his cue to make a triumphal entry, preceded by a court of cameramen shuffling backwards? "I ask you all to rise with me and welcome David Owen" said Cartwright in relief; the procession was planned but, like the rest of the Rally, Cartwright could not actually see Dr Owen standing, head bowed, until his time had come.

Those who are not members of the Elect find the passionate feeling for Dr Owen baffling. Not only is he not a great orator; what he actually says is neither novel nor penetrating. The most he claimed for the two policy pillars of his temple — nuclear defence and the "social market" — was that they were sound and sensible. Contemplation of Trident's might could comfort his supporters; it can hardly inspire them. It is quite certain that his supporters are as muddled about the mysterious powers for good of the 'social market' as are all those whom Dr Owen condemns for failing to grasp its meaning.

The passionate feeling he arouses in his opponents also seems baffling — it would not be ideologically difficult for them to undermine those two pillars as frail and irrelevant supports for a great programme of social reform. Roy Jenkins in particular is derisive about founding a party on a missile and, as he said on Saturday, the "mysteries" of the social market. Attacking the "sub-Thatcherite" policies of Owen he added that if he were asked which was under greater threat, the provision of consumer goods or "the nexus of civilised public services", he would unhesitatingly answer the latter.

Yet this potential political distancing from Owen is cramped and stifled for they cannot dismiss the man's public presence, and the personal sway he undoubtedly commands. This band of apostles is the Frankenstein's monster they helped create with all their talk of a "new politics" that somehow would not be about politics at all. Now that the Fab Four (less John Lennon) want to get back to the real thing they find they have this waywardly independent and powerful creature queering their pitch.

It was the pro-mergerites, especially Bob Maclennan in his "Leader's Speech", who repeatedly referred to the world outside the Octagon Centre as the main determinant of their political choice. The British public demands a united centre left was their argument, and they have a right to no less. The alternative is horrible. The Liberals' Lady Seear told a lunchtime meeting that Thatcherism's attack on local government was undermining the very "foundation of democracy". (She got a standing ovation, as much for what she is — a grand old civilised lady — as what she said.) Even stolid councillor Flo Clucas announced that she thought that "we are on the road to fascism". Like the Liberals the weekend before, it is the form and actions of Conservatism today which dominate their political horizon, not the dangers of an enfeebled socialism.

> ***'Owen's band is the Frankenstein's monster the SDP helped create with their talk of a new politics which would not be about politics at all'***

On their own, many Owenites will recite the same list of social and political ills as Liberals, socialists and pro-merger social democrats: poverty, injustice, the erosion of civil liberties, the threat of a government which is "an elected dictatorship". Owenite Yvonne Smith of Newcastle said she had got involved because there were so many wrongs in health and education she wanted to undo, too much injustice, too many poor people having to scrimp just to get by when there are policies to change that.

The words equality and injustice did not slip out of her leader's lips on Saturday night. The words he kept using were "constancy", "clarity", "commitment", "conviction", "courage" and "sustained" as in: "Can I just say this to all of you: thank you for your friendship. Without it, I could never have been sustained throughout the last few months." It is said with a hint of a crack and a tremble in the voice and is the "heartbeat" of Owen's rapport with his Elect.

In essence, his speech on Saturday said: I am a lonely man who has chosen the right things through courage, clarity and conviction; for this I have been reviled. I could have wrought vengeance with all my destructive power, after Eastbourne, during the election campaign, during the merger talks. But I am a man of probity and restrained myself. I could not have done this without my rock-like Peter (John Cartwright, "whose wisdom and constancy I value more than words can say" — more slight crack and tremble) and without you, whom I love and who love me. Let us arise now after our months of travail and begin our journey to the promised land, knowing that it is going to be a long and hard road we must travel down together.

The next day, Rosemary Brownlow, a sturdy teacher from Blyth Valley and the woman who shared the platform with Owen for a similar rally at Portsmouth, told the conference that she had spent Christmas pondering the "fundamental values". These are "love, friendship, loyalty, generosity, tolerance, the values of family life". On these values, she made her political decision to stay with the SDP, "with the colleagues and under the leader I love and admire".

Some Owenites did try to establish political reasons for their decision. Polly Toynbee made a staunch defence of universal child benefit but this is, if not a dead parrot, certainly a dead duck. (The poverty of women and children did not feature in Owen's speech nor in the policy differences which Danny Finkelstein enumerated as defining the go-it-aloners' clear-cut principles.) A few reverted to the original argument about the need for a multi-party system. This speaks of a feeling that the party system of politics is breaking down. None dared explore the significance of that feeling.

Even the Owenites are hard-pressed to define what separates them *politically* from everyone else. "We've talked about it a lot," said Christine Wilson, sister of Fiona Wilson who organises the Campaign for Social Democracy, "but we can't find any particular reason." It is, she conceded, "personal". It's not surprising that those attempting to find clear political reasons fall back in exasperation on analogies of great leaders of our times. "Don't be late for your führer" jibed a hardened right-wing *Times* journalist after he had been wrestling for some time with Christopher Brocklebank-Fowler, the one Tory MP to join the SDP, about why he's now following Owen.

What draws people to these fascist analogies is not Owen's commonplace policies; it is the inversion of political principle and personal feeling at a time when conventional party structures are breaking down. Dr Owen, like Mrs Thatcher and like Hitler before them, rises above the "squalor" of party politics by offering to the service of the public their conviction and sincerity. They offer, as J. P. Stern said in *Hitler: The Führer and the People**, "authenticity" in place of the artificiality of a political system that no longer represents what they feel. "Thank you David," said St Peter Cartwright, "for putting into words what so many of us feel", adding *sotto voce* as the cheers billowed "Let them see him; jump him up." And the jumped-up leader rose, with clenched fists, above the crowd.

Ask Yvonne Smith, an "ordinary" admirer who did not address the conference, why, given those common political feelings, was she sticking with Owen? He was the only "credible leader", he can be "very, very strong". Above all "people believe him, he's honest, you feel when he's telling you something, he believes what he says." The admiration began when Owen visited Newcastle and plucked her from the floor to share his platform. Their leader, for whom they will risk all political credibility, may espouse dull, ordinary, rather right-wing policies. He has the gift of making them feel that in choosing him, he has chosen them (it's a small party) to share his travail as a romantic hero. In telling his audience that it was "far better" for the faint-hearts to leave and the strong-hearts remain, he stopped sounding (and looking) like everywoman's image of Mr Rochester or even sardonic Mr Darcy and more like Sydney Carton preparing for the sacrificial guillotine. Oh, but how those throbbing bosoms yearn to save him. □

**Hitler: The Führer and the People*, by J. P. Stern, published by Fontana Paperbacks, 1984.

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Tax relief is no relief

Tax relief for private health insurance is top of the agenda for the Thatcher review of NHS spending.
CHRISTOPHER HUHNE
explains why it is a bad idea, even from a Tory point of view

THE GOVERNMENT may be about to make an historic mistake. John Moore, the Health and Social Services Secretary, is keen on the idea of extending tax relief for insurance payments for private health care, in order to ease the crisis in the National Health Service.

Instead of announcing more cash for the health service in the Budget, the Chancellor would announce that personal insurance payments would be treated just like pension contributions, a personal allowance, or mortgage interest payments. (At present, tax relief is available only to those earning less than £8,500 a year, who in most cases can't afford insurance anyway.)

The theory is that full tax relief would be far cheaper — costing initially only £200 million or so — than pumping more cash into the NHS, because it would draw far more private money into health care. Although there would be a "deadweight" cost of around £150 million a year because relief would be given to people who already have health insurance, eventually the overall amount spent on health care, privately and publicly, would increase markedly. As people switched from the NHS to the private sector, the NHS would have more resources left to deal with those who remained.

The second stage of the argument is that the demand for health care is infinite, so why not let people decide for themselves how much they want to pay? The justification for tax relief is simply that the growth of private health care has been stultified by the provision of a free service, and hence some compensation is needed.

A joke in poor taste

These arguments are seriously wrong-headed. Tax relief for private health insurance could be the beginning of the end for a universal NHS. It would lead to substantial inefficiency, and to escalating costs in the NHS which would make the apparent cheapness of the tax relief a bad joke. Whatever Nigel Lawson decides to do in his Budget, he should leave the structure of health care alone.

Each stage of the market-based argument is flawed. The demand for health care is far from being infinite, because health care is not synonymous with goods and services like a holiday, a second home or a video recorder. Moreover, much of the demand for health care is quite insensitive to whether or not there are charges. Certainly, many illnesses are psychosomatic. There is a part of the demand for medical attention which may well be sensitive to price. American research has found, for example, that if patients pay a quarter of fees, total spending drops by about a fifth. Nevertheless, most people do not have car crashes, fall off bicycles or develop back pains because they want them.

BUPA Press Office

Super BUPA: "an ideal setting for the businessman", but he's still paying tax

Secondly, the demand for medical care is not determined by the patient. The extent of the patient's involvement is to say "here is where it hurts, doctor", just as the extent of most motorists' involvement with garage repairs is to say "the clutch rattles when the car goes at 70". From that point onwards, the consumer is in the hands of the professionals, quite unlike the purchaser of soap powder, broccoli or even a restaurant meal. The professionals determine the supply. And as Shaw pointed out, every profession is a conspiracy against the laity. The doctor decides what diagnostic tests to take, and what the treatment should be. In economic terms, the *supplier* of the service determines the demand for it.

> ***'The professions determine the supply. And as Shaw pointed out, every profession is a conspiracy against the laity'***

One of the good things about the NHS, as Julian Le Grand argued last week, is that the government is forced to set some limits on professional enthusiasm. Insurance based systems such as that in the United States exercise no such restraint. In America, the results of health care, as far as we can tell, are not very different and may be a little worse than those here. Life expectancy, for example, is shorter.

Yet the Americans spend twice as much as Britain's share of national income on health care. The Americans undergo proportionately twice as many hysterectomies, prostatectomies, cholecystectomies and hernia operations. The contrast between the excess of inputs and the relative meagreness of outputs in the American insurance-based system could not be clearer than in the care of newly born babies. The American infant mortality rate is higher than Britain's, yet proportionately twice as many births are carried out by Caesarean section.

Insurance-based systems merely encourage doctors to specify the highest level of service they can, as if the cost were zero. Everybody who is insured gets a Rolls Royce, regardless of whether a Metro would do. The reason is that the insurance company meets whatever cost the doctors decide is necessary — and consumers don't protest because the rises are spread out among the whole of the insured population.

The encouragement of a similar system in Britain would be an extraordinary economic mistake. By making insurance premia fully tax deductible, the Chancellor would be beginning the ratchet of costs which is so remarkable a feature of the United States system of medical care. But the inefficiency would not stop in the private sector. ▷

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As the private sector expanded and wanted more nurses and doctors, their pay and other medical costs would rise. The NHS would also have to pay more to keep up, putting further pressure on the resources available to it. It is no accident that American doctors are paid 5.1 times the national average wage, against 2.4 times here. Far from relieving pressure on the NHS, an expansion of private insurance would merely compound it.

Secondly, the growth of private sector would remove the NHS's most vocal and articulate pressure group: its middle-class users who are currently the greatest supporters of the health service professionals in pressing for adequate funding. The process of erosion, always the political strategy of those hostile to a service regardless of means, would have begun in earnest.

The best solution for the crisis in the NHS is to fund it properly, bringing the growth in its resources into line with the growth in the economy. The advantage of the service is its overall efficiency, resulting from a firm budget constraint on its cost and political decisions about the amount of care which should be provided.

Perverse incentives

The disadvantages of the current NHS arrangements are two: the problem of its funding when there is a politically unsympathetic government, and the inefficiencies which exist in allocating resources within it.

Some of the NHS's incentives are perverse: one district health authority will not receive adequate compensation for operating difficult cases which may be transferred from another district; the payments come only after a delay; there is an incentive for consultants to develop long NHS waiting lists — and some of the patients will then decide to pay the consultant privately. Allowing patients to opt for districts with shorter waiting lists, and insisting that their "home" health authority then pays the cost, would introduce a strong incentive to allocate health care efficiently.

The political problem is that ministers are still stuck at the two legs bad, four legs good stage of the argument. The Tories have a mental block about public spending, which is why they were always in favour of tax allowances and reliefs rather than subsidies, despite the fact that in economic terms they have exactly the same impact. If that mental block now means that the encouragement of higher standards of national health care has to come through the private sector rather than the NHS, then at least let the encouragement be in a less obnoxious and more efficient form than tax relief on insurance premia.

If tax relief there must be, it should be made available either to insurance companies which pay a fixed lump sum for particular diagnoses, or to Health Maintenance Organisations — hospitals, doctors and insurers rolled into one — which undertake to provide health care themselves to the patient paying the premium.

The drawback with the first type of system is that private hospitals actively dislike and discourage difficult (and hence expensive) cases if they are paid a flat fee regardless of the difficulty, so it would throw the difficult ones back on the NHS. The second system mirrors the NHS, in that it ensures at least some internal incentives to economise on the cost of pay and other inputs. If it does not, its profits falls. If there are competing HMOs, customer resistance to annual payments will also provide some budget constraint.

In effect, though, this reproduces the NHS in the private sector. The main difference is simply that people pay insurance premia to the HMO rather than tax payments to the government. The administrative costs of the NHS, however, tend to be about a quarter of those of insurance systems. The costs of tax collection have to be incurred anyway, and the tax system fortunately still takes proportionately more from the rich than the poor. It would be a far happier circumstance if ministers were simply to reconcile themselves to the successful institution which is the National Health Service. Provided, of course, that they also fund it properly. □

Christopher Huhne is the economics editor of the Guardian.

Great NHS Reform Competition!

Anyone with an idea for changing the health service can enter this exciting new contest, announced by Mrs Thatcher on *Panorama* two weeks ago.

Rules:

1. No more money can be spent on patients or nurses, though you can give more to bureaucrats or the rich.
2. The decision of the judge (M. Thatcher) is final.

Here are some of the ideas that have already emerged as front runners:

Hotel charges

Patients pay for their "board and lodging" costs. Mrs Thatcher ruled this out during the election campaign, then afterwards said it wouldn't happen "in the lifetime of this parliament". After the *Panorama* programme Downing Street told lobby correspondents that this pledge was now, Nixonianly, "non-operative". Then Mrs Thatcher told parliament that it wasn't. In any case, it would be expensive to administer and politically unpopular.

Tax relief

Ten per cent of the population have some form of private health insurance. No doubt they'd be very grateful for the £150m subsidy which tax relief on their premiums would bring, but it wouldn't do much for the NHS.

Vouchers

There are at least two variations:

1. Each patient gets, from his or her GP, a voucher entitling them to be treated for their specific complaint. The patient could "cash" it at the NHS hospital of their choice, or put it towards private treatment. Right-wing ideologues don't like it because it doesn't deal adequately with "moral hazard" — the fear that patients and doctors are irresponsible when they spend other people's money — because the money still comes from the government.
2. Everyone is issued with coupons which they use to pay the GP of their choice, either in part or full. Kenneth Clarke, the then health secretary, described it in 1985 as "somewhat dotty and unlikely to play any part in the future provision of general practice in this country".

Compulsory insurance

Very costly to administer (it could double the administrative costs). If done privately it would really mean the dismantling of the NHS. But it could be done with a national health insurance scheme with flat rate premiums administered by an independent trust. Or it could be done like SERPS, the state pension scheme, allowing people to pay more if they liked it. Problem: there is still "moral hazard".

Internal market

Mrs Thatcher keeps telling the *Independent* how much she likes this idea. David Owen likes it too, but Neil Kinnock doesn't. Effectively it means that health authorities pay for health care but don't necessarily provide it. Instead they buy it from the cheapest authority or private hospital. Hospitals already buy health care from other districts to some extent, but the charging system isn't really set up to cope with it. The theory is that the internal market increases efficiency by allowing hospitals to specialise in what they do best.

Carlton Club proposals

Leaked to the *Guardian*, this is a programme drawn up by the private health industry and Conservative MPs — including the former health minister Sir Gerard Vaughan and junior health minister Lord Skelmersdale — at the Carlton Club in November. It includes most of the above, together with disbanding "old fashioned trade unions" including NUPE, COHSE and ASTMS. Downing Street describes it as "part of the national debate".

Independent trust

This means re-establishing the NHS with an apolitical board, chair, and chief executive. It's not a very exciting idea; former Thatcher policy advisers Oliver Letwin and John Redwood recently argued, sniffily, that "it seems, *prima facie*, unlikely that attitudes will be much improved merely by altering the administrative framework".

Give it to the GPs

The brainchild of Alan Maynard, professor of Health Economics at York University, GPs would become the "budget holders" for the NHS, so that when a doctor sent a patient to hospital, they would at the same time be allocating part of their annual budget to cover the costs of the treatment. A bit weird.

National lottery

A late entry from the *Sun*: "Mrs Thatcher may copy the *Sun*'s smash-hit Lotto game to raise money for the troubled NHS. A national lottery that would yield hundreds of millions of pounds is being considered by the Premier."

Jolyon Jenkins

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'88 PRESIDENTIAL RACE

Iowa: where nobodies become somebodies

ELGY GILLESPIE *previews the first votes in the United States presidential election campaign*

Washington

ONLY IN THE "flyover" grasslands of Iowa, as Jimmy Carter found out for the first and last time in 1976, can a nobody become a somebody in no time at all. It was a sweet taste of revenge for the state that used to be jeered at as "Iowa: gateway to Nebraska". Iowa stages the first of the "primaries" next week — the elections among registered party supporters to choose their presidential candidates for November's real thing.

Three presidential campaigns later, and the opposite seems to be true. Gary Hart has turned into the incredible shrinking man, his illegal contributions and his remarks about not being the first adulterer in the White House encountering thunderous silence from the brownie-munching, terminally polite, and Christian forgiving folks of Iowa. (Population of German origin: 21 per cent; Roman Catholic population: 26 per cent; blacks: 1 per cent; hispanics: 1 per cent; state revenue: 93 per cent farming; crime rate: nil.) Iowa takes a dim view of Ronald Reagan, the only US President who ever spent any time there while a young radio announcer — and even its highly conservative 31 per cent Republican voters do not support aid to the *contra*, let alone the 35 per cent Democrats.

One more fact alone about Iowans ought to have tipped Gary Hart the wink about which qualification not to push on his job resumé. Iowans, it seems, buy over twice the amount of cooking chocolate per head as the rest of the United States. They bake all their own cakes and are teetotallers virtually to an Iowan. And as Teddy Kennedy found out the hard way in 1980, they may forgive but they never forget.

Gary who?

The way things are going, it will be "Gary who?" by the time those 100,000 all-Christian card-carrying Democrats and 110,000 solid white Republicans head for their frigid firehalls and front parlours in Sioux City and Dubuque and Cedar Rapids on 8 February to caucus until past midnight — all night long, very probably.

The ballot is not secret for Democrats. To send forth delegates from their precinct primaries to their state convention, the party members pick a corner of their school hall or community room for each preference. After they have eaten homebaked chocolate brownies and drunk cocoa, they defend their preferences verbally to the death and vote in their delegates. It is homespun, as versions of democracy go, but at least the primaries allow 15 million citizens, not just party bosses, to have a say in who gets to run by March, and 25 million by July.

Iowa's Democrat survivors go to the state convention, and finally to the Atlanta Democrat convention on 18 July. The open method will probably favour a cluster of the top three runners: lovable, liberal, rumpled Paul Simon from Illinois, Massachusetts governor Mike Dukakis and — thanks to a last-minute rush of expensive TV spots with farming subsidy promises — protectionist Congressman Dick Gephardt of Missouri, now the clear front runner. It will be possible to stand in a chilly school hall corner and put up dukes for those three with a stomach full of homemade cookies. The brief meteor of media chic from Arizona, witty ectomorph Bruce Babbitt, having blazed last month has burnt out already. I don't suppose you could do it for Gary Hart or the electrifying Reverend Jesse Jackson, who got 1 per cent there last time. Both would do better in a secret ballot. Handsome Senator Al Gore will be nearly invisible, since he keeps saying he hates the whole Iowa caucus system.

It will not be the end of the world for Mike Dukakis if he does not get into the Iowa top cluster, since he is bound to do best in New Hampshire on 16 February. Indeed, if he does not do best there, and Hart also does not win as he did last election, both of them are finished. At this point Simon and Babbitt will be slugging it out on fiscal reform and offering Jesse Jackson whatever plum post he desires in return for the Southern delegates.

By April, non-candidates Mario Cuomo and Bill Bradley's phones will be ringing. As Art Buchwald says, anybody who doesn't want to run for President must have a mind of his own, and voters like that. So nothing looks good for Democrats, who have managed only four lousy years in the last 20 at the White House. If Iowa has significance for them, it is for being earliest and giving a candidate who gets in the top two in the first primaries the so-called "snowball" boost.

Babbitt, the press's darling

A seven-man virtual dead heat for the Democrat nomination has been predicted by tireless Congressman Gephardt from Missouri, and it is beginning to seem like the feasible nightmare that could ease every troubled Republican heart. Almost the only indication that a "dark horse" could shoot out of the bumper package is the love affair the press is enjoying with Bruce Babbitt — a candidate so refreshingly frank about his gauche ways and lack of polish that he excused his delivery before the mike with the words "If they could teach Mr Ed the talking horse to speak, then they oughta be able to teach me."

But Babbitt has a bad news message about eliminating the deficit and even wants to means-test and tax social security, performance-test education, and raise taxes, with a new bracket for the wealthy. Eating all the bratwurst in Iowa cannot cure that handicap, and he is baffled by his sudden popularity — baffled and suspicious. In part, he is popular because he loves to joke against himself. That makes him suspicious because, well, look what it did to Mo Udall.

His fellow Arizonan Mo Udall was the press darling and wit in 1976. "Put your ear to the ground, and you can hear the movement towards Mo Udall just as surely as you can hear elephants making love," wrote his aide Mark Shields at a similarly tantalising moment in Iowa, when Mo was getting sudden media adulation like Babbitt's. "But in fact I couldn't hear anything — not even butterflies in foreplay," Mo writes mournfully in his new book about losing the election, *Too Funny to be President*. One newspaper even erroneously awarded him victory — allowing him a night of bliss before the morning edition reversed the count in Jimmy Carter's favour.

Winning heartland hearts

Winning the hearts of the heartland continues to be vitally important to the 13 would-be Presidents of the United States (on occasion, known as "wannabes"). First of all Iowa is the first heat, though not a state primary. Second, while not necessarily a reliable indicator — the New Hampshire primaries a week later often show distinctly different results, with more bearing on the end — it can wipe out the weaker brethren and winnow the men from the wimps.

So if, say, the Republicans' Pete du Pont and General Al Haig do badly, this could be their Waterloo, and the secret ballot with curtained voting booths selected by the Republican party members will hardly help these two. A big Bob Dole win is probable, despite the nasty last-minute bickering with Vice-President George Bush over Iranscam and tax returns which has earned them the press soubriquet "the battling Bickersons".

We can stipulate that Iowa will help winnow out Pat Robertson and former sports star Jack Kemp of Buffalo and if they come nowhere, their chances of a "snowball" effect in New Hampshire go too. Kemp may limp on into Super Tuesday at Atlanta on 8 March, by which time Dole and Bush will have demanded to see each other's school reports and bloodtests or come to physical blows.

But why Iowa, when it is so manifestly unlike the rest of the United States and so untypical? Well and why not Iowa, say Iowans, who are beginning to enjoy the crazy circus that enlivens the dreary winter months every four years. As well as allowing them to feel like stingy punters at the races with bucks to blow at long last, it permits them to register a stern teutonic protest vote agin the current bogeys in power. They vote overwhelmingly in favour of the hopeful who is the least like the current incumbent.

So the current bakers' dozen have been following Teddy Kennedy's advice and buying a good roadmap of Iowa, with the lone exception of Tennessee Senator Al Gore, who despises the Iowa precinct primaries so much that he went there this month just to say so for the benefit of the Southern states he hopes are still watching him on television.

However, many of the other candidates spent from 100 to 150 days of 1987 in Iowa, and Bruce Babbitt claims to have cycled round its perimeters. We are about to see if this costly, accidental, just-grewed way of giving honest citizens a say in who runs for President has become even more eccentric and questionable than the "smoke-filled room of party hacks". In the summer of 1815 John Adams, then a fat old man of 80, wrote incredulously to his friend the former President Thomas Jefferson, 72, "Who shall write a history of the American Revolution? Who can write it? Who will ever be able?" If he had been given an inkling about Iowa, he might have said the same. □

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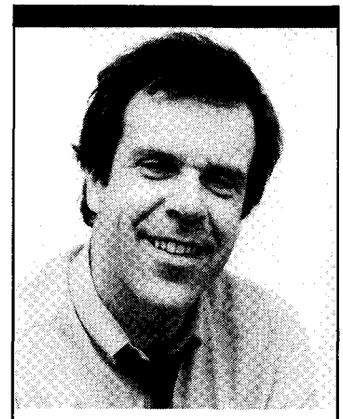
STATE OF THE NATION



John Lloyd

Run, Tony, Run. Now is the time

TONY BENN should stand for leadership of the Labour Party. He is the only person on Labour's left with the experience, force and sweep of intellect to attempt the job. And it should be attempted.

If he were to do so, he would have the chance to give shape and expression to a socialist programme which he has been promising to make flesh for not much less than two decades, but of which he has always stopped short. To define "real" socialism in and for the closing years of the 20th century is a mission from which nearly all major figures in other socialist, labour or social democratic parties have shrunk, or have explicitly consigned to history's dustbin. He is thus poised on the edge of an endeavour with very high stakes and with momentous consequences, win or lose. The value of such a project to politics, and not just British politics either (always assuming it is carried through with vigour and honesty), is that it will demonstrate what "real" socialism might look like and how it might operate in our society; and even more valuably, it would force those whom he correctly perceives to be seeking to elide socialist aims into a social democratic programme to come clean, define what *they* mean, and get on with it.

He was prevented from mounting such a challenge by the sheer quantity of extraneous matter which got in the way of his deputy leadership bid in 1981. It was launched when the leadership was at its weakest, when there was a steadily advancing forest fire of condemnation of the last Labour government, fed above all by Benn himself and a ludicrous struggle, with which Benn's candidature was conflated, to change a selected number of the Labour Party's constitutional mechanisms from one sort of fixing to another. Further, much of the argument on both sides habitually referred to conference decisions, or to the mandates of other forums, in order to "prove" that no further argument on the matter should be entertained. The result was that there was very little political debate whatsoever.

Now (though there are always reasons found by British politicians not to have political arguments of any depth), these inhibitions do not or should not apply. We might thus be about to benefit from a debate of substance.

We partly know, or can reasonably infer, what the bones of the Benn argument are likely to be. His ten-point indictment of the current leadership, delivered to the Nottinghamshire members of the National Union of Mineworkers over last weekend and printed in the *Guardian* on Monday, reduces to this: that Neil Kinnock and the shadow cabinet are presiding over the abandonment (or at best serious dilution) of socialism, evinced by their lack of support for trade unionists and local councils in struggle, their attacks on, amounting to attempts to expel, "good socialists" from the party; bypassing or downgrading the national executive and unions by an overweeningly arrogant leader's office, coupled with weakness and indecisiveness in the mounting of "Labour Listens" campaigns; a present capitulation to public relations techniques and a putative capitulation to coalitionism. The result: unelectability.

HIS ALTERNATIVE is less clear, and needs more interpretation; not least because it has so far been phrased in terms of "looking at", "arguing for", "examining and explaining", "analysing", "discussing". This is dishonest: all the matters on which Benn calls for analysis and discussion have been decided by him and his political associates for many years.

That outline is this: "common" ownership should be extended further in all directions (though it should take an undefined but different form from that of public corporations) so that huge and growing extra-parliamentary centres of private power may be challenged or dissolved; an undefined but massive increase in democratic control should similarly act as a solvent to such allegedly public centres of power as the civil service, the judiciary, the House of Lords, the monarchy and the BBC; this would be parallelled by a decentralisation of power to regional and local levels, while civil liberties and free speech should be protected and extended. Ireland should be united in independence from Britain. The environment should be protected. Britain should leave NATO and the European Community, break its alignment with the US and other western democracies and seek a non-aligned status.

There is much that has to be made precise in this mix of policies which presently is not; that would be Benn's task during the campaign, assisted by his opponents and by the media. But as the only politician in Britain, and one of the very few in the advanced democracies, who could lead such a movement, Benn owes it to himself and to the left to do so as energetically as he has ever tried anything in his energetic, rich and dramatic political life.

In doing so, he would do the second service of forcing his ideological opponents in the Labour Party to define, in their turn, what *they* are about. If he does make clear what he wants in the way of common ownership, in the way of new international alignments, in the way of democratic and constitutional reforms, he will — or should — force the leadership and those who stand with it to make a declaration of their own over that range of issues. And that would be a very good thing.

For this reason, above others. Ever since Aneurin Bevan ceased, in the fifties, to propose a programme similar in some respects to Benn's — public ownership plus realignment — Labour's right and left have squelched through many ideological bogs, only rarely finding hard ground. The social democratic party which Crosland's "Future of Socialism" would have required as a vehicle for his policies has never quite emerged — in part because of the increasingly oppressive trade union link, in part because right and left did not, as Gaitskell *and* Bevan had both at one time wished, slug it out to defeat or victory.

IT SHOULD now be clear that Labour is not now being prepared to usher in the kind of society Benn and his comrades would define as socialist. There are different levels of reasons for this.

First, and usually most salient, the right and most of the soft left think that Benn and the Campaign Group of MPs are shaky on the democratic part of democratic socialism. That is because they support the continued membership of at least one organised Trotskyist group, Militant, and because they broadly support at least the political campaign of the Provisional IRA.

Second, the right and soft left, differing in much, agree that parliament is the prime mover for change. Benn, again like the early Bevan, sees it as one vehicle for working-class emancipation among others; with extra-parliamentary activities — such as demonstrations, strikes and other popular manifestations — as more important.

Third, the right and soft left have lost most of their faith in public ownership of everything other than monopoly utilities. They think that some features of popular capitalism are popular, and may stay that way. They think the market is a superior allocative mechanism in many areas of the economy, though they are not starry-eyed about it. They want British business to be productive and strong, and they are willing to take on the unions (at least in theory) to ensure that it is. They want to make deals with capital: deals to increase the social wage, to widen the scope for workers' participation. But they are aware that such deals can only be made once they are seen by the capitalists to be sound managers of the national economy, here and abroad.

Fourth, they do not, by and large, want to change the international alignments. Some are left-wing Atlanticists; some increasingly enthusiastic European Communitarians; a few Commonwealth First people. Worse (from Benn's point of view) many who had been unilateralists are now changing into multilateralists, if only because they have seen that they cannot persuade the electorate to their beliefs.

In summary, Labour is emerging as a social democratic party, quite capable of appealing to the working class. to progressive bourgeois opinion and to whatever constitutes the centre ground. It will retain a large will to reduce inequalities and restore a sense of responsibility to public life; it should also be able to channel its own radicalism along the lines of necessary constitutional reforms — of the voting system, of the Lords,of the monarchy — which would begin to liberate Britain from the decaying absurdities of its past, still pressing powerfully on the present. It has a huge job to do, and it might well do quite a lot of it.

But it will never be socialist in the terms defined by Tony Benn. Now is a great time for Neil Kinnock to tell him, and the country, so: clearly, openly and unmistakably. And in articulating his opposition to Benn, Kinnock will fully define his alternative to the right and his ability to capture the vacated centre. □

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RIGHT OF REPLY

How to lose your reputation

Labour MP John Cummings went to a London pub for a harmless drink. Little did he know that he'd be pilloried by a tabloid newspaper and find his reputation in ruins.

YVONNE ROBERTS *reports*

ON 28 SEPTEMBER, John Cummings did something which he believed to be harmless. He went into a pub in London called the Golden Lion in Dean Street at 7.15 pm, on his way to buy tickets for the new Willy Russell play. He ordered a pint, went to the lavatory, returned to his drink and discovered his briefcase was missing. The price he paid for that theft was his reputation.

John Cummings is 46 and, until last June, he had been a miner in the northern pit village of Murton since the age of 15. In the general election, after years as leader of the Labour council, he was elected candidate for Easington with the largest Labour majority in the country.

His stolen briefcase contained paperwork and a book of official rail warrants issued to MPs by the Fees Office in the House of Commons. The warrants can be exchanged for railway tickets. John Cummings had nothing to hide. He reported the theft that evening to the landlord of the pub and, the next morning, he also reported it to the police, his bank, the Fees Office and the Commons Police Room.

A month later, on 25 October, the *Sunday Mirror* ran a front-page story which was a tribute to the power of innuendo. It was only made possible by that lethal combination in Fleet Street — sharp reporters and a naive member of the public.

"Shame of MP's Nights in Gay Bar' read the headlines, "Rent Boy had His Rail Pass". The by-line alongside the "Exclusive" tag read Martin Brunt with additional reporting by Chris House and Mike Housego. In fact, the only crime, much less "shame", of which John Cummings was guilty, was that he had been into a pub, known by others to be gay, half a dozen times in two years. In each case, he had chosen it because it happens to be near Shaftesbury Avenue. He stayed long enough to drink a pint, and had then gone off to pick up tickets for the theatre. "I realised some of the lads were gay after a couple of visits," John Cummings says, "But I hadn't a clue they were rent boys. And why should it have concerned me anyway?"

On Friday, 23 October, two days before the *Sunday Mirror* published its "exclusive", John Cummings did what he always does: he spent the night in The Colliery Arms in Murton. He went home to the house he shares with his elderly parents and at midnight, his mother called him from his bed. Two reporters from the *Sunday Mirror* wanted to see him immediately to reply to "various allegations". "I'd had a few pints," he says now. "If I hadn't and the call had come at 10'clock in the morning, I'd have acted very differently."

Two men turned up. The gist of their charge was that he had met Frank McCallion, a rent boy, in Durham during the general election campaign (a period when, John Cummings realised later, every minute of his time was accounted for) and paid him £30 for "a sex session". Later, the reporters claimed McCallion and Cummings had met in the Golden Lion and had sex again. It was then, according to McCallion, that John Cummings had given him the travel warrant.

The two reporters told John Cummings that McCallion was a heroin addict and had Aids and asked if he had used a condom. John Cummings said he had never even met McCallion, but he had had his briefcase stolen. The two reporters told him they had been tipped off by the Metropolitan Police and they had paid McCallion for his story. (Mike Housego when asked by me if he had paid McCallion money, replied eloquently, "Get stuffed!" and hung up.) They also asked John Cummings if he was bisexual. At the time, confused, shocked and half asleep, John Cummings said he was. "It sounds daft", he says, "but I assumed it applied to liking men and women equally, platonically. I've never slept with a man, and I've never been anywhere near a rent boy."

After almost an hour's interrogation, the reporters asked him whether he had ever slept with a rent boy, Cummings says. At that point, he finally realised the trap into which he was being led and said he wanted to take legal advice.

Substantial enough to print?

John Cummings' sexuality is not, in any case, at issue. What is, is the *Sunday Mirror*'s front-page story and the way it was obtained. It typifies so much of what passes for "investigation" in the tabloid press today. First, even if the reporters and John Parker, the editor, believed it to be true, by what tacky criteria did they deem it substantial enough to print?

It was based only on the evidence of a self-confessed junkie and rent boy to whom money had been paid. On that flimsiest of grounds, the paper decided to crucify a man who reflects so much of what the allegedly Labour paper's readership believes in, although he had denied all knowledge of his accuser. Moreover, the major part of the story was extracted in the early hours of the morning from a man who had had several pints to drink and felt highly confused.

In the story which appeared John Cummings' denial of knowing McCallion was relegated to page two. Instead, the opening paragraphs quoted John Cummings apparently verbatim (John Cummings said he asked the reporters not to take notes and to switch off their tape recorder, which they did). In these paragraphs, certain details were omitted, questions and answers re-arranged and the true sequence disturbed. The re-stitched story read as if he volunteered information without questions and implicitly was admitting guilt, which he emphatically was not.

In the piece, John Cummings is quoted as saying: "The people who voted for me would not understand about my private life. I could try and lie my way out but I'm not that sort of bloke." And again: "I'm going to stick it out. I've broken the news to my family and local party officials and they are going to stand by me. I'm keeping my fingers crossed."

John Cummings says he can't recollect whether or not he made those remarks; but if he did, he was referring not to any alleged homosexual affair with a rent boy, as the story implies, but to the fact that he realised that as an innocent man, a few infrequent visits to a gay pub had left him dangerously vulnerable to precisely the kind of treatment he was now receiving.

On the Sunday the story appeared, Frank McCallion, the rent boy, issued a statement to the Press Association. Of John Cummings, McCallion said: "I've never even talked to him." He explained: "I'm a junkie and I needed some stuff so I took his [a reporter's] money." A few weeks ago, McCallion was found guilty of stealing John Cummings' travel warrant and sentenced to 30 days. The briefcase is still missing.

On 28 October, solicitor Bernard Simons sent a letter to Mike Molloy, editor-in-chief of the *Sunday Mirror*, asking for a retraction and an apology in the newspaper on behalf of John Cummings. Molloy replied that there was no need for an apology or a retraction and he rejected the charge that McCallion had been paid. "He was not prepared to deny that he had utilised the services of rent boys in the past," Mike Molloy wrote — a reference to the point, an hour into the interview, when Cummings realised what was going on and said he wanted to take legal advice.

Harlots all

Two weeks after the *Sunday Mirror*'s fearless "expose" of John Cummings, its sister paper, the *Daily Mirror*, ran a front-page story. The headline read: "My Sex Lies over Elton. Rent boy in pop 'scandal' confesses." The "Exclusive" quoted Steven Hardy, a rent boy, who said he made up lies about Elton John. "I did it for the money and the *Sun* was easy to con."

The *Mirror* has long fulminated at the *Sun*'s lack of ethics. Joe Haynes, Maxwell's Mr Jeeves, has labelled the *Sun* "the harlot of Fleet Street". What then does that make the *Sunday Mirror* now? Perhaps the *Sun* should Reveal All?

Ann Clywd's Unfair Reporting and the Right to Reply Bill receives its second reading today. The bill, supported by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, recognises that, with 1,000 complaints a year to the Press Council, the dam of self-restraint in newspapers has been utterly broken. No price is too high to pay for simulated scandal. The Bill would enact a statutory right of reply to inaccurate reporting, extend legal aid to libel actions and set up a media commission with the legal authority to require publication of corrections. In short, it would have guaranteed John Cummings a chance to restore a reputation devastated in the eyes of all but those who know him. (If he decides to sue now and he has a very good chance of success, he must find a minimum of £15,000. Money he doesn't have.)

So for John Cummings, like so many other victims, there is no recompense. "What I can't recover," he says, "is my peace of mind. True or false, I know now a newspaper can never lose." □

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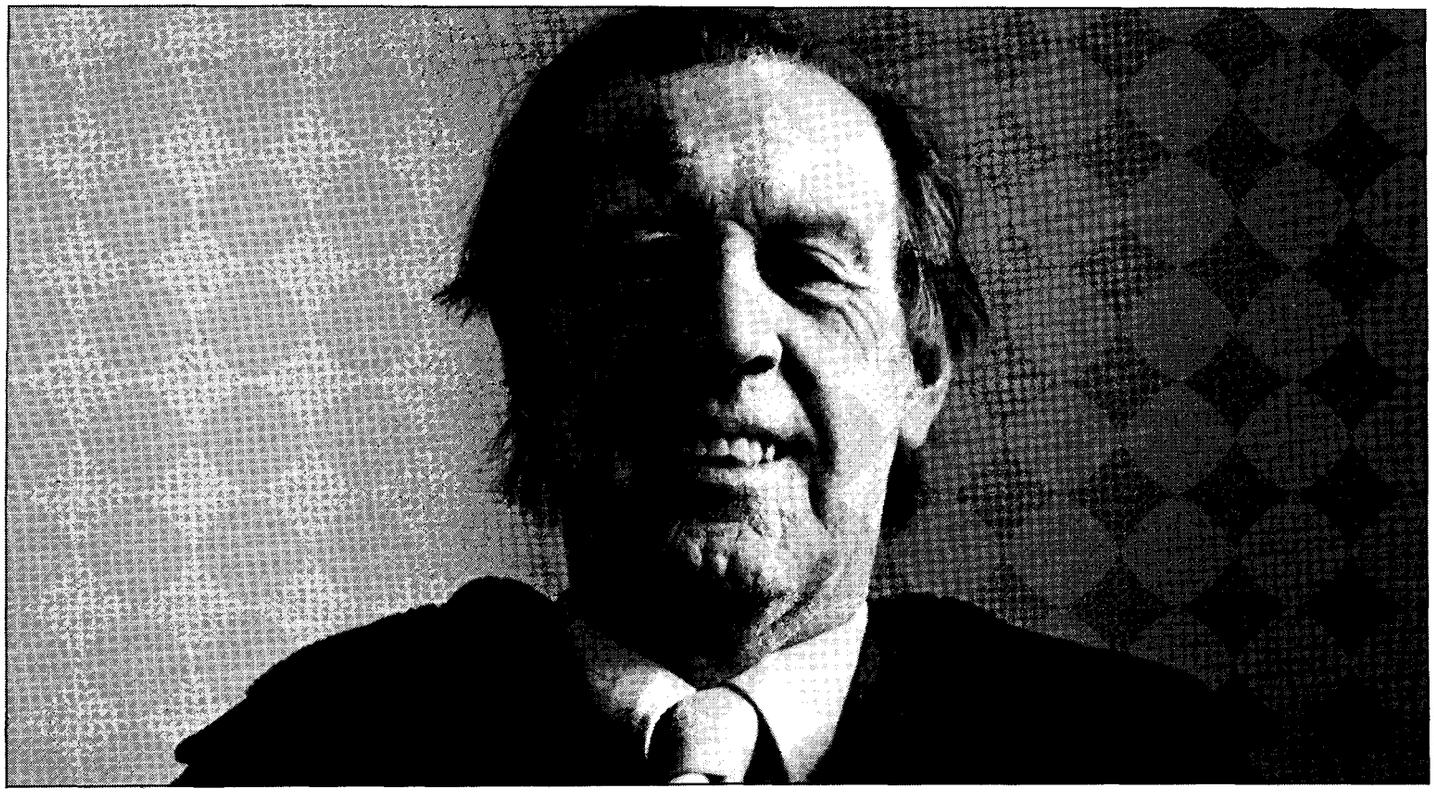

Keith McMillan/Verso

Only connect: the life of Raymond Williams

British intellectual life has lost its most distinctive and original mind, and the left its most outstanding socialist intellectual.* STUART HALL *writes an appreciation of the work and ideas of Raymond Williams

IN THIS AGE of philistine barbarism over which Mrs Thatcher is pleased to preside, the loss of Raymond Williams is irreparable: and those of us who had the privilege to know him personally, to read his work, to talk and argue with him, to be formed, intellectually and politically, in his shadow, hardly know how to express or where to put our sense of the enormity of that loss.

Raymond Williams was born in Gwent, the son of a railway signalman. After grammar school, he served in Normandy in the war, went to Cambridge to read English, became a staff tutor in adult education for the Oxford Delegacy in 1946, moved to Cambridge (which he never left) in 1961 and was made Professor of Modern Drama.

I first met him in Oxford in the mid-1950s when a number of us, looking for a way out of the impasse of the elitism of F. R. Leavis's reading of English literary traditions, were given by him, and read with mounting excitement, the early chapters of what was to become *Culture and Society*. Thereafter, our paths continually crossed. He became a contributor to and a key figure in the early New Left. In 1966, he took the lead in drafting the *May Day Manifesto*, an attempt to formulate a socialist alternative to Harold Wilson's grimly technocratic vision. Intellectually, his work dominated the development of cultural studies. He was a founder member of the Socialist Society.

I never had the privilege of being taught by him, but he was the most formative intellectual influence on my life. I often had the uncanny feeling that we had stumbled unawares on to the same line of thinking — only he had given it, already, so lucid and compelling a formulation. However, it is through his work and writing that he influenced several generations across the world, and it is by this that future generations will measure him.

His books have no comparison among contemporary writing for range and stubbornness of critical intelligence. In an astonishing variety of modes of writing (and in a long and creative collaboration with his wife, Joy Williams) he offered the most sustained critical engagement with the central domains of English cultural life. He not so much engaged the map of English culture as re-drew it. *Culture and Society*, his first major book, took the well-known body of writers and thinkers from Burke and Cobbett to Tawney and Leavis and, by tracing their response, from a variety of different positions, to the dominant forces of bourgeois industrial culture, revealed a new configuration in the architecture of English critical thought, which we had hardly glimpsed before.

The Long Revolution used this "native" idiom of critical writing for an audacious exercise in theorising the idea of culture itself — not as "the civilising arts" or "abstract ideal" or even "the best that has been thought and said", but as a "whole way of life". "Since our way of seeing things is literally our way of living, the process of communication is in fact the process of community: the sharing of common meanings, and thence common activities and purposes; the offering, reception and comparison of new meanings, leading to the tensions and achievements of growth and change."

This is the first such attempt by an English literary intellectual since Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* — and, in the generosity of spirit and passion of intelligence in wrestling with brutally difficult theoretical questions, it is far in advance of Arnold. The contrast in titles alone is telling. Even more astonishing was Williams's

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capacity to detach "culture" from its stubborn integument in a conservative "structure of feeling, to re-appropriate for critical thought the very idea of 'tradition' and to construct an organic connection between these ideas and "the long revolution" or what he called "the slow reach for control": that difficult but persistent effort to democratise our whole way of life to which, intellectually and politically, Raymond Williams's whole life and work was quietly dedicated.

In *Keywords*, with his scrupulous attention to how cultural transformations register as changes in the meanings of words, he again simply "re-mapped" some of the main-turning points of English culture — in what, disarmingly, at first presents itself as merely a personal glossary. In *Marxism and Literature* and elsewhere, the very status of the literary text is finally challenged and displaced by a new kind of attention to language and different kinds of writing, conceived as forms of literary production. The latter is his most condensed and persuasive reflection on the strengths and limitations of the classical marxist tradition, from the perspective of what he came to call "cultural materialism".

In *The Country and The City*, Raymond Williams brought to bear, against the well-entrenched, dominant conception of the English "country house" poetic tradition, a sense of historical context, and an understanding of the complex interplay between text and society, so powerful that it is simply not possible, ever again, to read it in the old way. Characteristically, this was no simple act of literary revaluation. The poems and their cultural settings are not downgraded, but re-claimed and re-ordered by the turning on to them of this penetrating critical-historical gaze. We *weigh* them differently. They are re-positioned in our imagination and understanding. The mystification of "agrarianism", which still sustains the "Heritage" impulse in contemporary English cultural life, is slowly dissolved and becomes, in its suffocatingly philistine-civilised forms, untenable as a serious intellectual proposition.

"I am very powerfully moved by the early churches, by the great cathedrals, and yet if I don't see the enormous weight of them on man, I don't altogether know how to be a socialist in the area where I work . . . if we acknowledge them as a contribution, we must also acknowledge them as an obstacle . . . The cathedrals are not just monuments to faith, the country houses are not just buildings of elegance. They are constantly presented to us as 'our heritage', inducing a particular way of seeing and relating to the world, which must be critically registered along with our acknowledgement of their value. I always see them as profoundly ambivalent" (*Politics and Letters*).

Everything about the man — his mind, his way of writing and speaking, his political intelligence — is in those few sentences. His range, connecting and spanning things which our compartmentalised ways of thinking routinely separate: the stubborn holding on to complexity — the "elegance" together with the "weight", the two ends of the chain; the perception that everything is part of this "giving and taking of descriptions" and affects our "way of seeing and relating to the world"; the long parentheses, which try to hold, so to speak, at the margin of the field of vision of any one sentence, the other connections waiting to be made; the relating of this critical exercise to the question of how to be a socialist, now . . .

He once observed that *Culture and Society* had been classified under headings as various as cultural history, historical semantics, history of ideas, social criticism, literary history and sociology. He could have added others, for the whole formation of that variety of intellectual projects now known as "cultural studies" would have been impossible without his path-breaking work. In fact, not only was his work unclassifiable: it actively resisted incorporation into the specialised vocabularies and institutional rituals of the academic disciplines. His whole idiom of thought not only broke across, but was deliberately designed to call into question, the taken-for-grantedness of these traditional categories and boundaries. His cast of mind was intrinsically *connective*. "My own view is that we must keep trying to grasp the process as a whole." He wrote, as he said himself, "against the frame of the forms".

> ***His work actively resisted incorporation into the specialised vocabularies and institutional rituals of the academic disciplines. His whole idiom of thought was deliberately designed to call into question the taken-for-grantedness of these traditional categories and boundaries***

In his writing and speaking — those slow, exploratory sentences that turned back on themselves, tracing the actual lived movement of his mind — he insisted on the effort to reach out beyond any specialised intelligentsia to a wider audience and to link intellectual work with a broader social and political purpose. "This is the vocabulary we share with others, often imperfectly, when we wish to discuss many of the central processes of our common life."

His "seriousness" — which separated him off from so many of his contemporaries — lay, precisely, in this determination to return everyone — critic, politician, student, general reader — to the only subject which *really mattered*: the "central processes of our common life".

His intellectual work and his politics were thus lived and thought as connected parts of the same project. Williams, as Francis Mulhern has remarked, was not a — "left academic". He was a socialist intellectual, which is different. His commitment to socialism was as unswerving as it was unsectarian: but he refused to be "captured" by any tendency. There wasn't the usual rift between thought and feeling, idea and life, which characterises so much "politicised" intellectual work. His practice was that of "dialogue" — with other traditions, positions, other ways of seeing and feeling, as a "pointed response to a particular orthodoxy" — because "the society of dialogue" was his way of imagining what socialism would be like.

His deep sense of the Welsh Border working-class community where he grew up, his rich and suggestive use of the idea of "community" in his writing and thinking, his scrupulous attention (for example, during the miners' strike) to the political consequences of the willed destruction of living communities, and his way of inhabiting the shared commitment to socialism as an "imagined community" — all these diverse meanings were held together within the same "structure of feeling".

Though he moved away from Wales to work, symbolically, he never left it. In his novels — *Border Country*, *The Fight for Manod*, *The Volunteers* (just reissued in paperback by the Hogarth Press) and the now incomplete Black Mountain novel — he not only continuously re-explored his own formation, but traced the fine calibrations between intellect and experience. Much of his working life was spent in, or in connection with, Oxbridge. Yet he was never "re-made" by Oxbridge. He regarded it simply as a good place to do serious work in. When we met to draft the *May Day Manifesto*, he was the only person who did not find it in any way odd that we were doing so in Coleridge's old rooms in Jesus College, Cambridge. Wales gave him a perspective on Cambridge — on the way a culture becomes dominant, a "central system of practices, meanings and values" — and the necessary tension between that and the emergent energies and experiences which stubbornly resist it.

In this as in so much else, he was, simply, *exemplary*. The left is deeply impoverished by the loss of his commanding central intelligence. □

The Socialist Society is organising a memorial service for Raymond Williams. Further notice will be given in the New Statesman.

RAYMOND WILLIAMS
1921–1988

'It's very striking that even people who are sceptical of socialist slogans – not the existing ruling class and its supporters but all those who belong, potentially, to a socialist direction – have no confidence in the future of the industrial capitalist order either. It is thus a matter of great political urgency, and not just of abstract speculation, to start to define a new socialist order. I see my own work for some years as an attempt at this, and I hope very many others will join in.'

From *Politics and Letters*

VERSO

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ESSAY

Tele-orgies of the Aids era

This country is enjoying a frisson of panic over British Telecom's "Talkabout" service, which allows up to ten people to talk anonymously on the phone for 38p a minute. Impressionable teenagers are talking about sex, drugs and where to meet. Labour MP Terry Lewis wants to ban it. Others want to censor dial-and-listen recorded sex-talk lines. Telephone sex services are common throughout the western world. But in France there is an added dimension — the Minitel video keyboards which are being attached to everyone's telephone. These allow subscribers to play sex games with each other and, argues **GUY SITBON**, ***have created "another country" of safe sex***

THERE ARE TWO FRANCES, Minitel France and the other one. Each day, the inhabitants of Minitel France spend several hours a day sitting in front of the terminals typing, conversing, communicating with other fanatics.

For them, a life that is not "telematic" is not worth living. As soon as they get a free moment in the office, they switch on their machines, dial 3615 and up comes the Teletel 3 logo on the screen. They key in their favourite code, "Corine" for example, and within a few minutes they are connected to the "Corine" service. In practice, it looks like this: a list of aliases come up on the screen. There's "Jacques", "Steel Blue", "Adele", "Cuddles", "Giorgio", "Sade", "Bachelor".

I chose "Bachelor", but "Bachelor" was at Rouen. No chance of dining with her that evening. Well, "Bachelor" wasn't a particularly feminine-sounding nickname, anyway. A woman wouldn't call herself that. "Bachelor", "Freebooter" or "Seeker" sound more like masculine call-signs. My correspondent very probably had a moustache and a bald patch, an M presenting himself as an F, either simply for the fun of it or for some other reason you might care to guess at.

Ten minutes later, still on "Corine", "Eva 35, free this evening" gives me her number. We chat away on the phone for a good two hours. We meet at eight o'clock at La Coupole. Since then I see Eva, who's called Michèle, once a week, or maybe once a fortnight or once a month. It all depends how busy we are. She's a really good friend. I tell her everything, all the things I don't tell anyone else. "Minitel-friends", recruited from well outside your own circle, are safe. They won't repeat anything to anyone, because they don't know anyone.

That's one France. There is another. Half the population — perhaps even 70 per cent — don't know what a Minitel is. Sometimes they've seen one, but to them the device is as mysterious as a flying saucer. Others know how to use their Minitel to find a telephone number, but that's all. Everyone, or almost everyone, has seen the posters in towns advertising Minitel services. To most people, they mean very little.

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There are women on the posters, sometimes partly — sometimes very – naked. It seems fairly certain there are things going on that aren't quite decent. As soon as you see there are women involved, you can bet vice is rearing its ugly head somewhere. Other posters invite you to phone a telephone number. And what do you think's going on at the other end of the line, with a picture of a woman on the poster like that? Nothing respectable, my good man, if you want my opinion. Filthy goings on, if you ask me. They're animals, I tell you. Sex maniacs. People like that get up to things you would not believe.

Yes, yes, yes, madam, and between themselves too, the women with the women and the men with the men. There's nothing they won't do. All the men are like that today, of course. You only have to look at the posters in the street. They show that in the street. Isn't it disgraceful? No wonder my niece is 32 and still not married. But she's a decent girl, my niece. There's no place for decent people any more.

Class against class. Once, long ago, it was serf against lord, then workers against capitalists and, not so long ago, left against right. Today, it's Minitel users against the old fogeys. Where there are two classes who don't understand or who despise each other, one will have the other's hide. The Minitelists have no leader. At the head of their enemies (who are in the majority) there's Pasqua, or anyone else who happens to be fishing for votes in National Front waters.

This is the era of disease prevention. At the very beginning of the eighties, it was still quite respectable for a woman to be conducting three passionate affairs — or even 13 — at the same time. After all, wasn't she "liberated"? And didn't she have the same desires as men? Then, not long before May 1981, three shattering questions descended upon humanity. Number one: what had women been liberated from? Number two: are you absolutely sure women have the same desires as men? Number three: have you heard about the three cases of contagious cancer in the homosexual community in San Francisco?

Disinfected screens

From that day on, "touching one another" became lethal. That changed everything. Perhaps it changed more than everything. We began to avoid one another. We became lonely, abandoned souls. It was just then, in 1984, that the first Minitels came upon the scene. They arrived at just the right moment, because we ourselves had not changed. It was just that we could no longer touch each other. Even meeting up was getting risky: didn't the saliva on our tongues carry a nasty virus as we spoke?

There is nothing more disinfected than a Minitel screen. All the laboratory experiments have come to the same conclusion: no bacteria or germs — not even a retro-virus — can be transmitted by computer. For four years now, without the decent citizens of our country knowing about it, the great orgies of the Aids era have been going on on Minitel. There, in letters of light on a digitalised screen, you can make love without touching or hearing one another.

"Again, again . . ."

"*Oui," chérie*, I love you

"Oh, that's so good. Again!"

The actual exchange isn't as quick as it might seem on paper. It takes tens of seconds, sometimes even a minute or two, for the message to get through. While you're waiting for a reply, you have time to make love to five or ten other girls, each one, naturally, at a different point on path to ecstasy. I know people, with Herculean power, who manage to conduct ten or 15 steamy sessions simultaneously. At the end of the night, they are exhausted, not to mention financially ruined (Minitel costs £6 an hour).

> ***For four years now, without the decent citizens of our country knowing about it, the great orgies of the Aids era have been going on on Minitel. There, in letters of light on a digitalised screen, you can make love without touching or hearing one another***

All the surveys show that nearly half of Minitel users "commit orgasm" at their keyboards. What does this prove? The phenomenon establishes with certainty that man, in common with the majority of other animals, "engages in masturbation". No more than that. The fact that people masturbate in front of their Minitels just adds one more activity to an infinite list.

It is more interesting to note that a small fraction of Minitel fanatics is made up of people who were, until recently, the loyal devotees of the collective sex party. They're doing the "same" thing today, but this time without touching. "They" include a filmmaker, a (female) press officer, a (female) TV editor, a lighting man in advertising photography, a writer of genius, a creative director in a big ad agency. The men are divorced. The women want to have a baby. The men used to be on the left. The women have become neither of the right nor the left (that is to say, they are on the left). The men don't believe in anything any more. The women have believed in everything. The men once went in search of freedom. The women are searching for a man.

Everything is as it used to be, as it always has been. What is new, though, is how they are going about these things, the methods they're employing. In different periods, couples have been formed by arrangement between families, by meeting in lecture halls, in cafés or at orgies. Today, Minitel offers a new option. Since 1984, thousands of marriages and bouncing babies have been born through Minitel. And thousands of divorces, too.

The devotees of the "Corine" service met up at a great party to celebrate the wedding of two of their number who met on "Corine". They came from Lyons, Nantes, Blois and elsewhere and met up in Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines at a family gathering where everyone knew everything about everyone else, but they had never met.

"Oh my god! So you're *Coeur Fleuri*? I imagined . . ."

"Hey now, you're prettier than you said you were. It's funny. I thought you'd be shorter . . ."

Almost all of them had made love on Minitel. At Saint-Quentin, they were older, less eloquent, more diffident, less rich, more or less that than on Minitel. But they were at least real. At first, everyone found the situation paralysing. Then they began to take each other by the arm. In the evening, I saw some leaving together in couples. Others went home alone to their Minitels, where everyone is better looking, kinder and so much less . . . how can I put it? . . . less real.

Choose your sex, your past

On Minitel, there are neither men nor women. You choose your sex, just as you choose your age, your figure, the colour of your eyes, your past. In short, you choose the life you want. Today, I'll be an engineer brought in to re-build all the transmitters for the TF1 TV channel. Tomorrow, I'll be a woman surgeon, aged 32 and married with two children. But this woman surgeon's skin doesn't suit me at all, so I change alias immediately. I'm now called "Hoggar" and I'm a guide in the desert. I normally spend my days in the Sahara. I'm just passing through Paris, here for a few days between treks through the desert. Mine is a life of sand, rocks and the infinite wastes, where I am alone with only God — and myself. But this Hoggar's no fun either. And, more to the point, he doesn't work. None of the women on the line has shown any real interest.

Will I find my great love by becoming "Solitary", a writer abandoned by everyone — his wife, his children, his readers? Only my publisher still has faith in me. He has set me up in a 16th-century chateau beside the Loire where I meditate and produce my life's work of hypermodern poetry, too advanced for an age stultified by television. I know I shall die without having been understood, except perhaps by one woman, by you, "Cuddles 78". Would you share my . . .?

Oh Christ, that's no good. No one cares about poets with tortured souls these days. I know, I'll be "Para", a lost soldier, a mercenary, or why not "Judith", kinky 16-year-old, or, or . . . I can choose any mask I like. I can have Minitel fantasies galore, a life more beautiful than life itself, a wife more beautiful than my own, a love no marriage can equal, and all at a knock-down price. I'm the son of Poseidon and the nymph Themis, a god of the computer keyboard, who at any moment can choose his face, his mind, his prey, his dreams and his nightmares. Oh Lord, lead us not into temptation!

When all is said and done, the Minitel is a nightclub open 24 hours a day. You go there to meet people. In France there are something like 2,000 of these clubs, some of them with large clienteles (200 to 300 names on the list). That gives you a good chance of finding someone, though you are equally likely to get lost, to pass unnoticed. You may prefer the smaller services with a dozen or so names. It's easier to get to know people. There are some people who go out on the town every night, doing the rounds of all the various "lines" to check out the scene or see if their mates are there.

The telephone chatlines, where you get ten people calling at the same time, aren't as anonymous as Minitel. Your voice gives you away. "Hello. 'Blond Joel' here. I'm wanting to speak to a woman. Blond Joel wanting a woman." The woman's voice breaks in: "What do you look like?" "I'm blond, aren't I? You deaf or something? How many more times do I have to tell you?" It's in to be tough, sarcastic and biting on the phone; politeness — much admired on Minitel — is thought wimpish. You get two minutes

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conversation for 20p. Then you have to call again and the meter ticks off another 20p. There's less sex talk on the telephone, but more people meet there.

If you're not so intrepid, for £20 you can have an intimate conversation with a woman. She'll take you off if not to seventh heaven then perhaps to the fifth or sixth, with a stock of delights charged by the minute.

Should we be shocked by the fact that the state, as owner of the telecommunications network, is an accessory to these dubious goings-on? Some newspapers have even gone so far as to denounce the authorities for acting as "pimps". But this is a bit like accusing the owner of a building of letting a man and woman sleep together in a rented flat. The Telecommunications Authority didn't set up the Minitel network (its official name is "Transpac") to stimulate conversation or meetings between its customers. They were the first to be surprised by the way their customers chose to use it. Far from having been *offered* to the public, these message services are a *misuse* of a public service.

Young couples used to get together behind the churchyard wall, but this does not mean the churches were built for that purpose — far from it. This is a business where the number of sharp operators and hard-nosed businessmen have made a bit of money. One or two small fortunes have perhaps been amassed from the *messageries roses* and some 10,000 employees earn a living from Minitel-related jobs. In the main, the money paid out goes into the coffers of the French state. Thanks to the French people's longing for love, it has been able to pay off the costs of one of the world's most impressive telecommunications networks. People come from everywhere — from elsewhere in Europe, from America, from Asia — to gaze in awe at this incredible French achievement, which is easily the equal of Concorde or the TGV. And, for once, it has not been a financial disaster!

Of the two million subscribers to Minitel (in five years' time there will be ten million), only one in ten are serious addicts. They consume up to £1,000 a month's worth of communication time, which in many cases is more than their earnings. A £1,000 bill represents ten hours a day of electronic dreaming.

Irresistible impulse

But things surely won't stop there. In a few months' time, the telephone "chatline" could start to get compulsive as Minitel. Until now, multi-user phones lines haven't been particularly convenient. You get cut off after two minutes and have to re-dial each time. Soon, however, what is officially known as the "continuous" phone-box will come into service. Ten total strangers will be able to get together on the same number and chat for hours (cost to the user: £6 an hour). What will they talk about? I'll leave you to guess.

For an unemployed woman to spend £1,000 on the Minitel and telephone, she must surely be responding to some irresistible impulse. It seems to be something visceral, a need for others, for that missing someone.

Since young people are no longer led by their parents into marriages which mark their entry into adulthood, and since divorce has become permissible — even standard — sorrow too has changed location. You don't find it in darkened rooms now, with women lamenting over cruel husbands. Today, the room is well lit, and what they are bemoaning is a shortage of men.

The dearth of men has not, however, produced a surplus of women. They are still as rare and as precious as ever. It used to be only the men who did the pursuing, but now women chase men with just as much fervour. And they are both equally determined not to find one another. They run after each other, a man after a woman, after another man, after another woman. The chain reaches into the infinite distance, each element moving at the same exhausting rhythm as computer communications, which maintain a proper distance between each one, so that nobody ever lays a hand on another person's body. This is how we shall enter the 21st century, if we carry on with the Minitel of today.

I do not want to make any predictions, but I think we shall discover other models. Computer communications — "compunications" — will become just one of the means we use in building a new kind of life. □

Translated from the original French by Chris Turner (Material Word).

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ARTS

When the world was young: Joëlle Miquel and Jessica Forde in the first of Rohmer's *4 Adventures*

CINEMA

Not new-waving but drowning

Judith Williamson

King Lear (15)
ICA
4 Adventures of Reinette & Mirabelle (U)
Renoir 1

"WE LIVE in a time in which movies and art do not exist . . . they have to be re-invented." So speaks the narrator in Godard's **King Lear**, of the world "after Chernobyl". And the film itself, product of a strange conception (the legendary deal signed on a table-napkin by Godard and Cannon Chairman Menahem Golan at Cannes) is concerned with the possibility of some kind of resurrection for imagery, a stripping of meaning back to things themselves, the impenetrable materiality of the real world.

Yet — to pursue the metaphor of the Christian calendar which Godard rather coyly invokes with his church bells and spring flowers — *King Lear* leaves you with the feeling that this is the Good Friday rather than the Easter Sunday of film-making.

For one thing, its style and structure are — for Godard — far from fresh. While part of the political strength of his early films was the way they forced you to think about their production, there is a kind of easy cynicism about Godard's relation to Cannon which pervades this whole film: whose self-referential comments on its immediate context consist merely of a repetitive harping about the constraints of working on "bankable projects" for "philistines", and have none of the wit and simplicity of, for example, the cheque-signing sequence which makes up the credits for *Tout Va Bien*. Rather, they strike a churlish (not to say snobbish) note since, after all, no one forced Godard to make the deal.

Like so many elements in the film, this device has all the hallmarks of Godard's "difficult" or "political" works, but gone sour. *Lear*'s mythic figures of The Great Writer (Norman Mailer), the gangster Don Learo with his daughter Cordelia, and William Shakespeare the Fifth, trying to re-write his ancestor's works in the modern world, are reminiscent of Godard's bold use of fictional characters in *Weekend* or *Vent d'Est* where Saint-Just and Emily Brontë, a Cavalryman and an Indian can wander on screen and sound forth; but here there is something more perfunctory about them and, while Godard simply can't help being *clever* ("are you trying to make a play for my girl?" barks Learo at Shakespeare V), he constantly implies that he is performing under duress and his jaded tone, whatever its social justification (Chernobyl, Cannon Inc) leaves one with the sense of a cantankerous Artist rather than a passionate critic. The audience is more likely to end up disillusioned with the film than with the world around it.

The other feature of *Lear* which is reminiscent of Godard's successfully didactic films is his use of wordplay on the screen: so that LEAR becomes a cLEARing . . . the word "Nothing", Cordelia's famous reply when Lear demands proof of her love, becomes NO THING. And it is in dealing with things — literally with nature — that the film raises its key issues.

But even these are not new; Godard seems to be going through that disaffection with language that hits particularly hard those who are most adept at using it. "Show — not tell" is a dictum of the film; which also tells us, "What is great is not the image but the emotion it evokes." It is as if, fed up with both society and language, Godard is straining towards some more direct, primal relationship between image and feeling: "Never know, always see." A copy of *The Waves* lies on the shore, lapped by real waves: the referent takes over. A film-can floats downstream; film stock lies coiled in a field.

These surreal images, juxtaposing nature with language, have a strange bearing on the rest of the film whose tortuousness is the very opposite of clear, and which relies heavily on cultural knowledge to make sense of it (in a montage of "Art" images and photos of filmmakers the voice-over talks familiarly of "Luchino" — meaning the director Visconti — and so on). Ultimately, though he invokes a re-birth of imagery, Godard does not produce it, and this is all the more disappointing since his consummate skill with his medium ends up in apparently effortless yet tedious convolutions.

The images were there as new — innocent and shy and strong. The line is Godard's, from *Lear*: but it applies almost perfectly to the latest release from another old-New-Wave director, Rohmer, whose **4 Adventures of Reinette & Mirabelle** recently opened. It is fascinating to compare the work of these two old colleagues, both exponents of a kind of filmmaking that fits badly with the present climate: Godard goes on going on about what he does, Rohmer goes on doing what he does, until you feel that his constant refining of his particular style is itself a kind of resistance. There are other comparisons to be made, not least in the relation of these now middle-aged male directors to young women: Godard's increasing, infuriating voyeurism contrasts strongly with Rohmer's evident, and most unusual, liking and respect for them. He seems able to grasp physicality — a crumpled nightdress, sleep — precisely without sexualising it, in the same way that he produces a heightened sense of light and colour, movement and sound, the rhythms of speech and the nuances of expression. Sometimes, as in *The Blue Hour* — the first story — the grain of the film itself, pushed to the limit in night light, seems part of that magnifying glass Rohmer holds against the daily world to show the texture of life as one experiences it when young — at once expanded and intensified.

If Rohmer's imagery here is as luminous and tactile as ever — sunlight on fabrics, thunder in the sky seem almost tangible in a way that makes his use of film far from transparent — his social eye

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and moral questioning are also at their funniest — and most forgiving. This "light" and incredibly low-budget film takes in issues like begging, stealing, lying, art dealing — and, as so often, indulgently lets one of its excellent heroines talk for ages and ages about silence. All this has its own gentle bearing on filmmaking: but Rohmer does, as Godard says, "show, not tell". □

PHOTOGRAPHY

Shades of black

Liz Heron

D-Max
Photographers' Gallery to 5 March
Roy de Carava
Photographers' Gallery to 27 February

IS THERE SUCH a thing as "black photography"? I'll start where Val Wilmer left off a few weeks ago (*NS* 22 January) when she concluded her piece on Roy de Carava with regret that his forthcoming show was to be linked to one by the D-Max group, thereby ghettoising yet again the work of black photographers.

I don't know what either D-Max or de Carava thinks about their juxtaposition. It certainly seems one that's been settled on as convenient and left at that, with no sight of the possibilities for drawing out historical and cultural distinctions as well as the whisps of connection. And it's shameful that there's no catalogue for such a major figure as **Roy de Carava**, who's showing for the first time in Britain. Only thanks to *Ten.8* magazine, which over a long period has ensured the visibility of Afro-American photography, is a context for him readily available.

De Carava was involved in the Black Arts movement of the '60s and had set up the Kamoinge Workshop where photographers had mutual support in producing positive images of black people. Behind them lay the vibrant legacy of the Harlem Renaissance. Even in the South black photographers had been active — the best known is P. H. Polk, working in Alabama in the '20s. There have also been noted black photo-journalists. Black photographers have by now been reclaimed from the obscurity meted out in the standard histories. Numerous publications and exhibitions, archives and research projects have documented their work from the 1860s onwards.

In Britain, in the absence of such diverse traditions and precedents — and with greater discontinuities of cultural identity — black photographers must face an enormous challenge. Overwhelmingly, the images of black people that have had public currency are those constructed through white eyes and through a vocabulary of otherness, whether it be criminalising or exoticising. This burdens black photographers inordinately with the task of answering racism.

The double bind formed by this defensive emphasis means that in stressing a positive, combative collectivity there's a reductive tendency. An exclusive emphasis on race absorbs the lineaments of personal identity, subsuming its complexities and fragmented determinations: all that is infinitely particular about individuals, however weighty their common history of oppressions and exclusions. What remains for a white society is a different, though less threatening, form of otherness.

In his introduction to the **D-Max** catalogue, Paul Gilroy describes the group's existence as "a challenge to the facile orthodoxies on black art and culture that are increasingly shared by voices both inside and outside the black community. These views can be defined firstly by their sense of blackness as a homogenous and simple category and secondly by their belief that black art must be understood primarily as a reaction — a response to racism."

D-Max invites no such constriction of vision. The seven photographers, five men, two women, have combined as a group while pursuing separate concerns. These do include quite definite anti-racist polemics, but with a significant dismissal of the traditional documentary prop.

David A. Bailey's deconstructionist series aims to shatter the coherence of the "outsider" identity, whether as publicly perceived or privately felt. The importance of the family album,and the fullness of personal histories such photographs enclose, presses acutely here. David Lewis asks us to visualise what it means to be colonised in a deep, enduring sense, through photo-constructions whose symbolism is tellingly economical. The experience of not belonging — and of British blacks confined to an urban setting, with all that connotes — is fused in Ingrid Pollard's colour-worked Lakeland shots, whose gaudy brilliance at times carries the double ambiguity of reference to some synthetic tropical idyll.

While this work explores the tight exclusions of Englishness, it stands next to the formal detachment of Zak Ove's Indian street pictures and his reportage of Bhopal after the disaster, Gilbert John's geometric formalism, and the pictures of dancers and performance artists shown by both Pollard and Suzanne Roden. In their celebration of cultural energy these relate to Marc Boothe's impressive portraits of musicians at work: Sonny Rollins, Art Blakey, B. B. King and others, who at once recall the affirmative meanings of US black culture this side of the Atlantic, and bring us back to de Carava's work.

D-Max takes its name from the term for the range of blacks a photographic emulsion can yield, a metaphor for plurality that's quite literally present in much of de Carava's virtuoso printing, where shadings of darkness rather than light sculpt the image. The darkest of these images seem to me extremely complex in their aesthetic, and amenable to varied readings. At one level we can read them as visual style — an expressionist depth and intensity that's recognisably of its time, though unseen to this degree in the work of any other still photographer. And troubling, moving, because it expresses "blackness" through so many gradations.

De Carava has very particular qualities. He also stands out as a photographer of the '50s and early '60s, evincing clear affinities with the European humanists yet prefiguring the harder, more sardonic perceptions to come. He took part in *Steichen's Family of Man* exhibition, whose

D-Max Dave Lewis' "The Flag of my Ancestors" (detail)

universalising pietism Roland Barthes so famously attacked. But outside Steichen's enterprise we can see de Carava's photographs as examples of Barthes' contrasted "progressive humanism". If they celebrate the life and spirit of black people, if they intimate the daily solidity of their world, these are existential statements rather than eternal verities.

The situation of young black photographers working in the Britain of the '80s bears little comparison. Although there have been individual black photographers at work, few of them are known and D-Max has come from virtually the first *generation* to have some access to the resources, the training and the education that can quell the longstanding fact of isolation. But, against the clichés of ethnic imagery and in the postmodern absence of humanistic certainties, they almost have to start from scratch.

It's plain that D-Max is alive to these realities and the show's strength is its diversity, though it could have been stronger with a tighter focus on individual directions. Its weakness is an understandable ambivalence which undermines the group's evident determination — how to reconcile apparent irreconcilables — the impulse to assert a positive black selfhood with the desire to explore its more contradictory components. What matters is that they've begun. □

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RADIO

Hurd instinct

Mark Fisher

"The radio's in the hands of such a lot of fools/Trying to anaesthetise the way that you feel" sung Elvis Costello. You could quibble with "a lot of", especially when the government's new proposals on reorganising radio take effect. Behind the cant about diversity and variety is a recipe for pap, profit and concentrated power

JUST SQUEEZING out John Moore on a split decision, Douglas Hurd's recently announced plans for radio have won him the Patrick Jenkin Memorial Award for Inept Minister of the Month. Seldom has a government statement attracted such ridicule, not only from the left but from broadcasters like Radio Luxembourg's Maurice Vass who put it in a nutshell: "It just seems daft."

The criticisms have been well aired. Auctioning off the proposed three new national stations hands them over to whichever media magnate has the deepest money bags. The deregulated "light touch" of the new Radio Authority will mean, in practice, no limits on advertising or needle time, and no requirement to provide news, leading to a generally lower standard of both entertainment and information. Above all, the absence of effective controls of ownership, and no control at all on cross-media interests, plays into the hands of people like Rupert Murdoch and Signor Berlesconi and their ambitions to control as much as they can of our media and our culture. But, for the government, these are small prices to pay for the millions of pounds from the sale of licenses and for a dry run in preparation for auctioning off ITV franchises in 1992.

The government's plans owe much to the free market simplicities of the Adam Smith Institute in its 1984 Omega Report on Communications and the 1985 "Media Scope" paper by the advertising agency D'Arcy McManus and Masius, with their marked confusion about the realities of current broadcasting. The experience of the pirate stations in the UK, and of new stations in Australia, France and Italy, is that audiences want specialist, dedicated stations. In Sydney, for example, 2JJJ and 2MMM provide adult rock, ABC-FM and MBS-FM concentrate on classical music. There are community and special interest stations (2WS, 2SER and 2EA), others for news and talk (2G3 and 2BL) and even one for racing (2KY). Diversity is *between* not within stations, with the public sector ABC playing an important part. Ignoring this, Douglas Hurd insists, in the one echo of Lord Reith in his statement, on "a diverse programme service calculated to appeal to a variety of tastes and interests and not limited to a single format". Not that potential applicants will be too worried, I suspect. The new Radio Authority will have no sanctions to use against a licensed station that moves rapidly to a single format.

The Home Secretary seems as hazy on the economics of radio, having commissioned no serious research, as he is on programming. The three generalist national stations inevitably will be chasing the same range of advertisers, in a market whose potential for expansion is uncertain. There are two schools of thought on this. The pessimists look at the size of radio advertising, currently just under £100m a year and only 3 per cent of national advertising revenue. They calculate that any growth sufficient to sustain three new national channels will be inadequate for the 50 independent local radio stations and the 200-plus community stations. They are particularly worried that these advertisers will also be courted by the BSB and Astra satellite television companies. If they are right, several independent local radio stations will go to the wall, as may some regional newspapers and free sheets.

The optimists, like Nigel Walmseley of Piccadilly Radio, look at the profitability of stations abroad and recall Lord Thomson's delight in having "a licence to print money". Eon-FM in Melbourne was set up with A$2m in 1980, lost A$1m in its first year, was sold for A$37.5m in February 1986 and again for A$56m in September that year. Ultimately, much will depend on the state of the national economy and of consumer credit.

A Labour Government would expand radio with just as much enthusiasm but in a very different way. The national stations could include a Channel 4-type model ensuring diversity by taking the best programmes from local stations and from independent producers, strangely ignored by Douglas Hurd. At the local level, we would recognise radio's unique ability to define and respond to the community and to give a voice to people and groups who feel increasingly powerless and ignored in our society.

That potential can only be secured by a positive public sector involvement, both by a regulatory framework which prevents concentration of ownership and which sets standards of balance, accuracy, etc., and by investment in programming. The exciting possibilities that community radio could open up for the housebound and disabled, for ethnic minorities, for education, or for rural communities, can be realised most effectively by a public agency, rather like the Australian Special Broadcasting Service, which promotes multi-cultural and other specialist programming. Such regulation, far from being the "constraint" of which Douglas Hurd complains, would be the best way to achieve real diversity.

We are living in an increasingly centralist and authoritarian state. We have a government which will use every parliamentary, political and legal means to strangle public debate, as *Real Lives*, the Zircon tapes, and the *Spycatcher* saga chillingly remind us. Coverage of current affairs is shrivelling; meanwhile, titles like the *Sun*, the *Star* and *Sunday Sport* carry so little hard news that they scarcely deserve to be called newspapers. It is indeed a bleak media landscape.

It will be exceedingly difficult for new commercial radio stations to play a part in widening that public debate by telling the truth about life on the dole in Newcastle, or the state of the Health Service in Birmingham, as local authorities, political parties and public bodies are forbidden to invest. Nevertheless, such stations may come on air and, ironically, the means of facilitating them could be the very deregulation that is so dear to the government. If that happens, Mrs Thatcher will give Douglas Hurd something rather more than an award for bungling. □

Mark Fisher is Shadow Minister for the Arts and Media.

TELEVISION

I am the Reza erection

Hugo Williams

SILENCE FELL on the Palace in Addis Ababa when Jonathan Dimbleby's film of the Ethiopian famine was shown to the Emperor Haile Selassie. Someone read to him from the Koran. *And they that did feed delicately were desolate in the streets.* A pale blue Volkswagen was waiting. "You can't be serious?" asked the Emperor. "You don't expect me to leave in that?" It was his only protest. Someone held the front seat forward while the Lion of Judah climbed into the back. He was never seen again.

Your Man Who Is There on **Arena** (BBC2, Fri.) was the most remarkable documentary to be shown on television for a long time. It concerned the Polish foreign correspondent Ryszard Kapuscinski, who is currently at work on *Amin*, the third volume of his trilogy on 20th-century despots. (Already published are *The Emperor* and *Shah of Shas*.) K has spent his entire working life abroad and in 30 years has witnessed 27 revolutions. "The key and root of all his writing", said director Andrej Wajda, who has made a film about him, "is in Poland. He was brought up in the Stalinist period and all his themes are typically Polish." K himself merely states that it is necessary to have a world perspective in order to understand one's own country's historical position, but the fact that he has been banned from working within the Polish media since martial law was introduced suggests that the authorities agree with Wajda. He was, anyway, a leading member of Solidarity.

"There is nothing so unimportant as news", said John Betjeman. The genius of Kapuscinski resides in his gift to see through the welter of current events to the symbols and emblems beneath: the man whose profession it was to paint and repaint the torture chamber in the Shah's Tehran; the mundane petrol station which now stands on the spot in Warsaw where the transports left for the concentration camps. In Kampala, where he lived during the Amin years, he was treated with respect, but all his things were gradually removed from his flat: lamps, rugs, the lot, like musical chairs, until there was nowhere for him to sit down. He related this with a scientific detachment and you had to laugh at the film's comic illustration of his quarters' piecemeal denudation. Lightbulbs were scarce apparently, so when you visited (you were never visited) you took one with you. "Sometimes you wanted to use the bulb", explained Kapuscinski, recognising perhaps the lightbulb's comic-book signification of "an idea". "At others, it was better not to . . ." One got the message.

Without his mythologising in prose of such things as the pale blue Volkswagen, I think we

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would have watched the accompanying film of that strange event as nothing more than another page of "news". As the liberal-democratic-socialist-pragmatists howled for their mummy last week — "There are far, far more important issues at stake here than who booked a hall" — one had a pretty good idea of what Ryszard Kapuscinski would, if anything, have said: "That's very interesting, Mrs Williams, but to get back to this question of the hall for one moment . . ."

If we are to believe the evidence on **QED**'s *Glimpses of Death* (BBC1 Wed.) from people who have died and lived to tell the tale, it would seem that there is indeed an afterlife after all, complete with wicker fences, landscaped gardens, welcoming relatives, tunnels of divine light, a long-haired Caucasian Jesus and, most intriguing, perfect eyesight with which to take it all in.

From his vantage point up near the ceiling, one dead man saw his wife waiting outside in a bright red trouser-suit — details are often described which are outside the subject's physical visual field — and came back to life, it seems, from sheer irritation. It was a lesson to any similarly party-minded widow not to count her chickens. Another deceased man, perched happily on top of the ward clock, was baffled to see panicky interns running round his bed with trolleys, assaulting his corpse with electric shock equipment. When they gave up and started wheeling his dear old body away to the knackers, that was too much for him and he took a grip on himself. Another was spurred to resurrect by anger at having his few remaining teeth loosened by some fool revival kit: if he didn't pull himself together he was liable to lose the lot.

The film suggested that the vision of kindly relatives and divine light is "encoded" in our brain and is "triggered off" to prepare us for the "transition to oblivion". Is it possible that such a device, if true, could be rendered useless evermore merely by being revealed on television?

The Modern World: Ten Great Writers (C4 Sun.) continued its triumphal roll-call with Marcel Proust and for the first time in the series actually made me want to read the book. Being French, Proust feels it necessary to repeat everything he ever thinks of three times, from sheer love of stylishness and the sound of his own voice. This doesn't matter a bit, because his sentences are of such translucent beauty and originality that one's head reels with them, as with the incense of some religion — which writing was to Proust — or with the scent of the hawthorn bushes which line Swann's Way.

More fascinating than this, or the famed satirical social commentaries on the high society of the fading Belle Epoque, were the parallels, described by Terence Kilmartin and Michel Butor, between Proust's "creative sleep of the unconscious" and Freud's comparable discoveries in the field of psychology: parallel routes through darkness, the one to the source of psychological trauma, the other towards the conquest of time — and so of our own mortality — through the timeless relativity of memory. I'm off to my local bookshop. □

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Books

MYTHOLOGY

It's all done with cameras

David Edgar

The Frontier Spirit is dear to American hearts, but then so are the complex co-operations of federal government and capitalism. Now a highly acclaimed new study exposes how Reagan has edited the two into looking like one

IN SARA DAVIDSON'S Rock Hudson biography there is an anecdote about Hollywood dinner parties at which Hudson, Henry Fonda, Natalie Wood and others would pretend to be the anonymous residents of a humdrum mid-west town (Fonda as the postman, Wood the usherette). In aspiring to the condition of their audiences, the celebrities may have meant more than they knew. For, as a number of commentators have argued (particularly Neil Postman in his incisive and timely *Amusing Ourselves to Death*), the star has ceased to be a beacon towards which the fans aspire and become the mirror in which they seek to be reflected.

That such a thesis goes some way to explain why an anonymous Beatles fan shot a President to impress a movie star is one of the many insights in Garry Wills' extraordinary anatomy, **Reagan's America: Innocents at Home** *(Heinemann, £14.95)*. Wills — who has also dissected the Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Kennedy and Nixon presidencies — is a kind of maverick Tory, whose wickedly engaging *Confessions of a Conservative* exposed a goodly proportion of the grandees of the American traditionalist right as crudely authoritarian, racist and antisemitic to

When is a soldier not a soldier? When he's the young Ronald Reagan

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boot. On from that, Wills lauded the presumption of liberal reformers (slavery "was wrong even if slaves did not think it wrong") and supported the trade unions (an institution which "reduces the rootlessness and drift of industrial life" and thereby "makes for social cohesion and stability"). It's no surprise that he expressed little enthusiasm for that individualist, libertarian strain of American conservatism out of which Reaganism grew — or, rather, affected to grow.

For Wills' grand project in this book is to demonstrate in painstaking detail that both Reagan's America and Reagan himself were constructed by collectivities, in particular by the biggest and baddest collectivity of them all, the federal government (or, in Reaganspeak, Govment) of the United States. Going back into the 19th century, Wills demonstrates how federal canals opened up Reagan's home state of Illinois as surely as federal highways, irrigation systems and subsequently defence contracts were to sustain his adopted state of California, with Star Wars promising the biggest federal boondoggle of them all. And what is true of the fatherland is true of the son: Wills shows how Reagan's touching faith in the power of poverty to bind families together is belied by his own history, in which privation in the depression blew his own family apart as surely as federal employment for Reagan's father and brother in a New Deal programme sucked it right back together again.

In order to adumbrate his thesis, Wills has gone to extraordinary investigative lengths (about which he cannot resist the temptation occasionally to crow: "In the Illinois State archives at Springfield, I cut open for the first time since they were tied up in 1937 the inventories of Lee County projects approved under the Civil Works Administration"). And the zeal of Wills' investigative beam is not dimmed as the story progresses: there is hardly a major event of Ronald Reagan's life that Wills has not revisited and explored; and, as he finds out, hardly an anecdote in the Gipper's extensive repertoire that has not been retrospectively sanitised if not invented.

Thus Reagan could neither have seen a Negro navy cook heroically machine-gunning Japanese planes at Pearl Harbour, nor photographed Nazi death camps in Germany (he never left mainland America during the course of the war); he has restrospectively rewritten his most famous movie moment (the "where's the rest of me" scene in *King's Row*) and his most proud achievement as Governor of California (where he neither cut welfare costs nor increased benefits, but was responsible for the biggest tax hike in that or any other state's history). As recently as 1985, he was repeating a spurious quotation from "Nikolai" Lenin, invented by the founder of the John Birch Society; a year earlier, in Europe, he'd silenced pro-Nicaraguan hecklers with the crisp but utterly mendacious assertion that "They haven't been there. I have."

As a journalistic achievement, Wills' book is prodigious — the most detailed presidential boob book of all time (clearly, the "goofproofers" assigned to Reagan's gubernatorial campaign were of limited effect). But Wills is too considerable a writer not to address the question begged by a politician who appears to have infinite capacity both to believe what is not true and to convince others that it doesn't matter.

In partial answer, Wills produces the notion of the "unique selling proposition", the truth that is true but not the whole truth or indeed a truth specific to the product for which it is asserted. Thus Reagan's bogus reduction of Californian expenditure was true in the deeper sense that it was his intention and purpose, it was "the working truth that he was dealing in".

For Wills, the major working truth that Reagan has dealt in all his life is precisely the myth that capitalism, individualism and moral certainty are not only compatible but mutually dependent, a myth that is expressed through the America of Reagan's Illinois youth, of World War Two and, most of all, of the movies. In his *Confessions*, Wills cites Chesterton's view that "calling the modern corporation private enterprise is like calling the Spanish Inquisition private judgement". In the Reagan book, he takes the argument further, pointing out that capitalism not only depends on human cooperation at a previously unthinkable level, it also provokes social and consequently moral *disruption* of an unprecented scale. It is the achievement of "Ronald Reagan: The Movie" to embody the belief that the contradiction does not exist, that America can and should aspire to Wills' definition of California as "a place of pioneering retrospection", which has "moved beyond the industrial revolution in its science" but lagged behind it in every other way, where there are "microchips that almost think, and they think in Victorian terms".

Reagan's America develops a splendid, complex and luscious argument, and the fact that so much of it appears to be Marxist in origin has not totally escaped its self-confessedly Conservative author. Of Reagan, he writes that "like much of America, he contained contradictions, but never experienced them". But one senses in Garry Wills himself a real experience and a real fear of the consequences of what he describes. As he concludes: "An older model of conservatism held that the past is necessarily a guide to the future . . . But what happens if, when we look into our historical rearview mirror, all we can see is a movie?" □

POP CULTURE

Who put the bomp?

Dick Hebdige

Cross-Overs: Art Into Pop, Pop into Art
JOHN A. WALKER *Comedia/Methuen* £25 & £7.95
Art into Pop
SIMON FRITH and HOWARD HORNE *Methuen* £22

IF, AS PROFESSIONAL fly boy Robert Elms has suggested, style really is "our national sport" . . . "the knowledge that stops us from being Americans", then the British art school must be singled out as *the* place where the rules of the style game get fixed.

The art school is where the bright lateral thinkers and budding stylepreneurs pick up — along with image-making skills and bohemian values — the respectable white equivalent of Delbert Wilkins' *Guide to Cruciality*. This is where they acquire what Frith and Horne call the "fine art attitude" which prefers the nutty conjunctions of collage and cut-up to the straight-line logic which connects the Late Great Isms (neo-classicism, Bauhaus modernism) to the styles of abstract reasoning that elsewhere dominate and define Higher Education. The art school has always been a safe house for the gifted misfit on the run from the straights and since the '50s has served as the natural training ground for the pop and fashion industries.

It's surprising, then, that until the publication of these two books the art school connection has remained relatively unexamined in the welter of writing on British pop culture. Where it has figured — in the pioneering work of Nuttal and Melly or more recently in Catherine McDermott's *Street Style* — that connection is celebrated and sketched out but rarely traced in detail. Elsewhere the sheer visual flair and semiotic nous that marks out much of British pop and rock have been interpreted, if at all, as the products of natural native sass or "subcultural resistance", or — vaguer still — as emanations of the Spirit of Postmodernism. In the latter case, the high incidence in contemporary art and popular culture of pastiche, parody and crossover and the blurring of high and mass art tend to be treated either as apocalytpic signs of a collapse of traditional hierarchies or as symptoms of the culturally homogenising power of multinational capital.

The value of both these new books lies in the ways in which they counteract the headier assertions about the source and meaning of these signs and symptoms by grounding them empirically in the history of British art education and in the individual biographies of that stream of former art students — from Lennon and Townshend to McLaren and Paul Morley — who have gone on to shape the look and sound of British pop.

Of the two, John Walker's book stays closest in tone and intention to its object of study. Abjuring theory for a simple "mapping of the field", the author charts the multiple cross-overs from fine art to pop and back again and considers the reciprocal influences at play in the work of selected artists and musicians in Britain and, to a lesser degree, North America. The survey is thorough: everything from paintings and sculptures of pop stars to image piracy, record sleeve design and pop and scratch video gets covered and there are case studies of some of the more interesting collaborations (Warhol/Velvet Underground, McLaren/punk, Gerald Scarfe/Pink Floyd, Jean-Paul Goude/Grace Jones) and of avant-garde work (Brian Eno, Laurie Anderson, Psychic TV, Test Department, etc.) The art historical bias shows in the form and content, though the book is copiously rather than lavishly illustrated. (It's unfortunate that many of the illustrations which are indispensible to the argument are poorly reproduced.) At times *Cross-Overs* reads like a detective story, as Walker traces the impact on pop of movements like Dada, surrealism, futurism and performance art. It's weakest at those points where the focus closes in so tightly on individuals that genealogy slides into mere list-making. Knowing who went to which college, for instance, is important, but doesn't always make for fascinating reading. However, for the most part it works — the interpretative commentary is crisp,

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insightful and never obtrusive, and the book should serve as a useful resource.

Simon Frith and Howard Horne's *Art into Pop* is more theoretically ambitious and more corrosive of the mythologies of individual creativity and difference on which — as the authors amply demonstrate — both the art school and the world of pop are built. The intention here is critical and analytical rather than descriptive or interpretative.

The pulse dictating the shifts within British rock and pop over the past 30 years is referred back to its primary source in art school ideologies of Individuality, Freedom, Art. Occasionally the analysis gets overly schematic. The authors' tendency to return absolutely everything to a fundamental ideological polarity between authenticity and artifice can become rather mechanical — you begin to guess what's coming next: progressive rock (authenticity); glam rock (artifice); punk (authenticity + artifice). And there's a danger that the reader may fall prey to that deadening pendulum effect you used to get in the Golden Age of binary oppositions when structuralism reigned supreme.

As one might expect from two sociologists, there are few pictures here to leaven the weight of the arguments, though those illustrations that are included are well judged and often intriguingly captioned in that witty, enigmatic style that signals to the reader that the authors really *do* know what postmodernism is about. This last point is crucial because the book is partly a critique of fashionable postmodernist rhetoric. The authors engage polemically with the arguments put forward by those cultural "pessimists" (Baudrillard and Jameson) and "optimists" (Iain Chambers) who subscribe to some version of the "postmodern condition" whilst failing to lay out what that might mean in precise sociological terms.

If, as is often claimed, postmodernism aestheticises politics (or substitutes aesthetics *for* politics) then Horne and Frith are out to sociologise Art, to substitute the strong model of sociological critique for the airy-fairy metaphors and baleful aphorisms of the Post. Sociology, of course, has had a lousy decade . . . *Art into Pop*, then, is the revenge of sociology on Art just as *The History Man* was the revenge of Eng. Lit. on sociology. It marks the return of the downtrodden straights: the revenge, to resort once more to Delbert Wilkins, of the squares on the sponditious.

Despite the occasional impression that the authors want to have their cake and eat it (to "celebrate" the Art School and to put it in its place), this book is timely, provocative and important. It deflates many of the mystifying and elitist attitudes still prevalent in the studios of most British art schools, design agencies and record companies, and it re-poses essential questions around personal identity and consumption within the context of a critical sociology of leisure. That context may not be as exciting or as sexy as some of the gaudier, glossier varieties of academic discourse currently available, but it's certainly stone-cold sober, and in the end, perhaps, more democratic and more accessible than many of the wilder, wickeder alternatives. After all, you can listen to what the squares have got to say. You don't have to dance like them. □

SPORT

Needle macho

Tom Pendry

The Roots of Football Hooliganism
ERIC DUNNING, PATRICK MURPHY and JOHN WILLIAMS *Routledge* £11.95

FOOTBALL HOOLIGANISM, the modern English disease, is a "product of unemployment and alienation amongst working class youth". It can only be tackled through "stricter policing, harsher laws" and "not until all traces of this cancer have been removed should English clubs be permitted to return to European competitions".

Such is the analysis of problems in football supported by many, not least by Tory politicians from the Prime Minister down. But this superficial, even dangerous, view is discarded in the new work from the team at Leicester University — all three of whose members head the Sir Norman Chester Football Research Centre, the pre-eminent base for sociological analysis of our national game.

Given that everyone is an expert on the subject of hooliganism, particularly since the dark days of Bradford, Brussels and Birmingham in 1985, their book makes an important intervention. Scholarly in approach and style, it is not aimed at the inhabitants of the terraces, but should be read by administrators of the games. I doubt that it will be, yet the question that it raises — why do football hooligans act as they do? — touches every one of us, whether through graffiti, chanting in shopping centres or through catching the "wrong" train on a Saturday.

The Roots of Football Hooliganism rapidly dispels many of the modern myths. Crowd disorders are not the product of the 1960s: the authors have traced hooliganism back to the 1870s when the game began. It is not the product of a right-wing conspiracy: the National Front prey upon the game, rather than undermine it. Violence is not caused by an excess of alcohol nor by scuffles on the pitch: both may be catalysts but neither are the root cause. Developing their arguments through sociology and history, the authors gradually replace the myths with a convincing theory: that the underlying cause of football hooliganism lies in the heavy masculine values of the working class — which find an expressive outlet in the football world. This is a long-term phenomenon, present for the last century in Britain and drawn out, particularly in the last two decades, by youth unemployment, the sensationalist nature of the tabloid press and the clumsy attempts of the government to "tackle" such behaviour.

This last is perhaps their most important point: the social policies currently being pursued are likely to exacerbate rather than reduce the problem. Those caught up in the excitement and terror of hooliganism are on the margins of society, so the concentration on private and sectional interests at the expense of greater equality creates resentment in those left behind. Imposing total membership schemes at matches, banning alcohol at grounds, introducing ever stricter laws and generally formalising attendance at football matches do not solve the problems but precisely make them worse.

The detailed knowledge shown in the book proves the worth of such academic units in investigating "new" areas. Indeed, the authors' previous book, *Hooligans Abroad*, involved them joining up with England's fans in Spain — and it is a pity that, given the current controversy over the ban on English clubs playing in Europe, the authors did not compare our problems with those of other countries — particularly as much of the violence on the continent is ascribed to local fans copying their English heroes. Far worse of a pity, however, is that the government, the leaders of the game, the police and the fans are for different reasons unlikely to read this study. □

Tom Pendry MP is chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party Sports Committee.

UTILITARIANISM

Our bodies, ourselves

Catherine Hall

Death, Dissection and the Destitute
RUTH RICHARDSON *Routledge* £19.95

ON MY WAY to work in East London, amongst the derelict factories and rubbish dumps that cluster on the edges of Docklands, I sometimes catch sight of the most elaborate funeral cortèges, the hearse loaded down with wreaths and festooned on all sides with memorials written in flowers: "For a beloved wife, mother and sister", "For Bobby, loved son and brother". The working-class funeral has long been connected in my mind with the fears of a pauper burial but until I read Ruth Richardson's fascinating and wide-ranging book, I did not associate it with the Anatomy Act of 1832. This was the act which allowed the "unclaimed" bodies of workhouse paupers to be claimed for science.

Richardson's narrative tells us of the development of anatomy and the construction of the body as an object of scientific study. From the 16th century on, surgeons had required corpses to dissect. Initially the supply came from the bodies of murderers; public dissection was a part of their punishment. Soon, however, demand outstripped supply and anatomists, desperately competing to provide the best training for their fee-paying students, sought alternative sources. They were unlikely to enquire too closely about the origins of the corpses they acquired.

Bodies, like everything else in a developing capitalist society, became commodities, and their price ensured that body-snatching, either before or after burial, became widespread. The fears around such desecration of the dead were focused most dramatically in Edinburgh in 1832 when it was discovered that Burke and Hare had murdered 16 people and delivered them to Surgeon's Square. Burke was to suffer a suitable end, hanged and dissected himself while thousands marched past, but his collaborator

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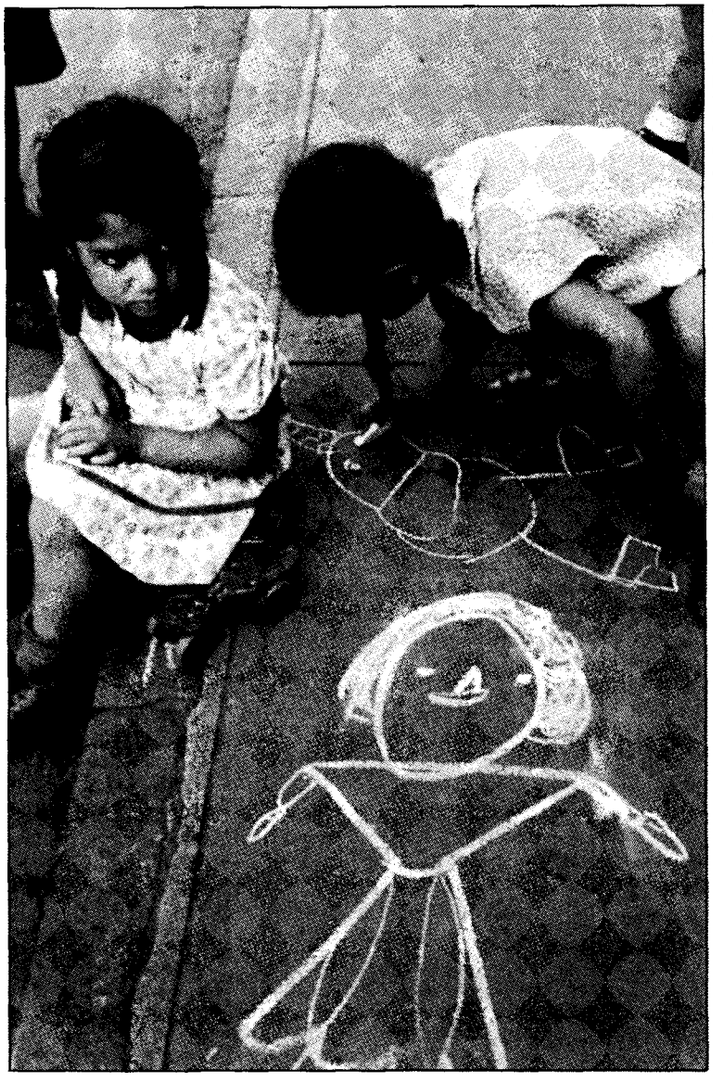

What could be more ephemeral than chalk messages washed away by the next shower of New York rain? The wayward charm of IN THE STREET (Duke University, £35.65 & £19.00), Helen Levitt's '40s photographs of children's street drawings and graffiti, lies partly in this sense of transience attached to something deeper. Children's uncurtailed fantasy life, full with the possibilities of older and more powerful selves, stirs beneath these monsters and heroes, kissing couples and sly proclamations of love or bravado scratched on the walls of Spanish Harlem. Not just innocence at all but, as Robert Coles says in his introduction, a "they" who are finally "us". (Liz Heron)

escaped prosecution by turning king's evidence, while their anatomist customer Knox was protected from the law and punished only by the crowd. Given the associations with crime and public punishment it is hardly surprising that there was deep popular hostility to dissection. That hostility, furthermore, was built on the widely held belief that there was a tie between body and soul after death. Fears of the spiritual powers of the dead were interlaced with powerfully protective rituals to preserve their identities and ensure their safety in the afterlife.

In the late 1820s, inspired Benthamites — and indeed Jeremy Bentham himself, for remember that his body is still preserved for the public to see in University College, a memorial to his refusal of such superstitions — hit upon a scheme which would both ensure a regular supply of bodies for the cause of medical science and inspire the poor to seek an escape from poverty. In the Select Committee which they set up and the resulting Anatomy Bill which they successfully piloted through the Commons on a second attempt, dissection, which had long been a feared and hated punishment for murder, became one for poverty. The "unclaimed" bodies of the workhouse poor were to provide the new food for the anatomist's knife.

Popular outrage at such a piece of class legislation was expressed in petitions, disturbances and serious riots. The spectre of "Nattomy Soup" entered workhouse mythology. Paternalist Tories and working-class Radicals united against the Bill while the reforming Whigs pushed it through. Orator Hunt fought a valiant fight in the Commons recommending in the first place that "the bodies of all our kings be dissected, instead of expending seven or eight hundred thousand pounds of the public money for their interment". Cobbett thundered against it in his *Political Register*, denouncing those political economists and free traders who wanted to provide cheap human bodies as a sign of national prosperity. However, Francis Place, architect in his own estimation at least of the legalisation of Trade Unions, was a strong supporter of the Bill, representing those artisans, committed to self-education and rationality, who struggled to reform the "barbaric" popular culture of the past and usher in a new rational world.

Ruth Richardson registers this division within working-class culture but I would have welcomed more discussion of it. Drawing heavily on the tradition of Edward Thompson, her book is a powerful celebration of the resistance of the poor and at the same time builds on Foucauldian analyses and emphasises the centrality of the medical profession to new relations of power. But there are unsolved puzzles. In this story of class antagonism not enough is made of the contradictions and ambiguities within class relations. We learn of the lone medical men who fought heroically against the dominant tendencies in their profession, but more could have been done to relate this to wider political and intellectual debates within the middleclass. Indeed, too easy an equation is made between Benthamites and the middleclass, while the discourses of religion are curiously absent from a book dealing with this subject and period.

At the end of her book, Ruth Richardson discusses the way in which the pauper funeral entered the sphere of myth, dissection representing a fear literally too horrible to contemplate. Immediately following this comes a statement from Her Majesty's Inspector of Anatomy. "The Anatomy Act", it informs us, "is still in force. Bequests of bodies now ensure that the social injustice it represented before the Welfare State no longer operates." As the new Benthamites in the Cabinet rise and rise and the Welfare State falls and falls this may yet turn out to be optimistic. As one Manchester radical put it in 1808: "O Poverty! thou art the unspeakable offence . . . Thou has neither rights, charters, immunities nor liberties." □

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FICTION

Lying low

Jonathan Mirsky

Half of Man is Woman
ZHANG XIANLIANG trans. MARTHA AVERY *Viking* £11.95

THIS NOVEL WAS a sensation when it was published in China three years ago. Its author, Zhang Xianliang, after his arrest and detention in 1957, spent the next 22 years in prison or labouring in the Chinese gulag. His crime was the poem he wrote during the Hundred Flowers, when thousands of intellectuals accepted Mao's invitation to say what was in their hearts and displeased him so much that many were not set free until three years after his death in 1976.

But the reason that Zhang is now so famous in China is not because he alone has disclosed what the gulag was like, or how extensive the suffering during the Cultural Revolution. What happened between 1966 and '76 is copiously written about in a genre called Wounded or Scar literature. Zhang is careful not to extend his novel back to the '50s, the years of his arrest and conviction: in those days Deng Xiaoping (whom Zhang's characters praise) was Party General Secretary, and that is dangerous ground for writers, who are encouraged to concentrate on the horrors of the period when Deng, too, was a prisoner. Nor is Zhang an especially heroic person nowadays; in January last year, when there was a brief crackdown on intellectuals, Zhang was one of the few the party could find who was willing publicly to attack those who were purged. Of course this was self-protective but most of his colleagues remained discreetly silent.

No, fame or notoriety has come to Zhang because by Chinese standards he has written a pornographic novel. Do not rush out to buy it on that account, hoping for a post-Mao pillow book. By our standards this is tepid stuff: a bit of nudity, a little groping and some painful thoughts on impotence.

But in China *Half of Man is Woman* is red-hot. The hero, also called Zhang, has also wasted half his life in the gulag. When the book begins, in 1966, China has been convulsed by the Cultural Revolution: "Who could have known," wonders the incarcerated Zhang, "who would have dreamed, that a prison gang in a labour camp would in China be considered a haven of peace?" This is no heavily guarded enclosure with guards, watch-towers, barbed wire and dogs; the prisoners work all day in the paddies, idle in the off-seasons and have plenty to eat. They are either finishing long sentences or serving short ones, so why escape? In any event, "Who would want to escape from such a garden anyway, during the times that China was going through?"

It is a pragmatic world: one inmate has sold stolen fertilizer to buy medicine for his ill mother; although sentenced to five years he has not been forced to return the money. Another, condemned for allowing the commune cow to die, has been offered a choice: pay for the cow or do hard labour. "I though it over — in the labour camps you still get something to eat. So I came on in. It's not so bad, just that there aren't any women."

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Dennis O'Driscoll

For so many years now
I have toiled
to perfect
Essence of Life
in bath crystal and perfume forms
on a commercial basis.

But no matter
how much laughter
or even love I add
to the tear ducts and the spleen
I cannot purge
some acrid residues.

To support my children
— who eat everything sweet
they can lay their hands on —
I may cut my losses soon
and sell it all off
as an insect repellent

or an anaphrodisiac.

Dennis O'Driscoll's Second Collection of poems, Hidden Extras, *was recently published by Anvil Press.*

No women — that is, no sex — is the real agony for the inmates, who talk of little else. At night the hero dreams of a beautiful girl he had never met, who had hanged herself years before. He senses an animal inside his chest, "tearing me to shreds and licking its bloody lips, it would pounce on the first woman it saw". But when he actually sees a naked woman prisoner, who appears to give him a bit of a come-on, he flees. When they meet again eight years later, she has already had two camp husbands, and after a short awkward courtship they "marry". She is experienced and eager. He is eager but can't.

The rest of the novel is about their deteriorating relationship, her bitterness and resulting infidelity with a local official, his shame and jealousy, her continued care for him by sewing shoes and giving him the best food, his final rejection of her (they immediately achieve sexual success) and "divorce". When they part she tells him, "I know you too well — you've done 20 years of hard labour, yet in your heart you're still a little master. You need somebody to wait on you, serve your needs . . ." She reminds him that he, who had never been with a woman, has finally overcome his impotence with her. "Don't forget. I'm the one who made you into a real man."

In the course of all this the author rather clumsily (it's not the translation, which is excellent) employs traditional techniques: animals speak and ghosts appear, including those of Marx, a Taoist sage and one of classical Chinese literature's most famous heroes. He also inserts a few bullet-proofing passages about how the prisoners cheer up when they hear Deng Xiaoping has been freed from his Cultural Revolution detention.

It is of course possible to write splendid novels about the gulag (*One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch*, for instance). And Zhang Xianliang is a vivid enough writer in the first half of this book, the pre-impotence section, when he describes the landscape and the life of his comrades. A file of unknown prisoners shuffles by: "One of our group threw a glowing cigarette down. The guards glared but didn't interfere. A prisoner walking along the dyke quickly scooped it up, greedily dragged twice, and passed it like a baton to the next man . . . following that success we tried a cucumber, and then a tomato . . . suddenly like an American football team throwers and receivers were in high spirits. Across the disappearing morning mist came a wave of laughter."

But in real life Zhang claims never to have been impotent — he enjoys a bit of a reputation as a lady's man — and imagination is his weakness. The ability to recall what *really* happened to him is where his strength lies, and that is what he should use. He is, however, unlikely to. His third novel, *Good Morning, Friends*, has been banned; this time Zhang branched out into masturbation. □

FICTION

In a stew

Richard Deveson

The Mushroom-Picker
ZINOVY ZINIK trans. MICHAEL GLENNY
Heinemann £11.95

THE THEME SEEMS appetising: Britain seen through a foreigner's eyes, the foreigner in this case being a Russian who is neither a sainted dissident nor a KGB plant but an *homme* considerably more than *moyen sensuel*, especially as regards the consumption of lamb and beef and pork and sausage and salami and kidney and tripe.

The author sounds auspicious too: a Russian who came to the west in 1975, where he has written five other novels (not yet translated into English) dealing with the emigré present and the Soviet past. And even the accompanying sheaves of publisher's hype don't have the usual effect of inspiring mistrust and a reluctance to be impressed, but imply the possibility that what we have here may actually be unpredictable and comic. Why, then, is *The Mushroom-Picker* really rather disappointing?

Kostya, the mushroom-picker himself, can stand for part of the answer. In Moscow he is a food fanatic, purportedly conducting gastro-

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nomic research for a treatise that will call for the westernising of the Soviet stomach and the victory of individualism over servility. In Britain, he is a depressed gormandising misfit, who is liable to eat cat biscuits at a cocktail party and to vent his homesickness in colossal feats of burping and boozing. For that matter, Clea — the wife who has brought him home to London — is an equally fanatical vegetarian. She is also an ex-loony lefty who isn't, however, particularly ex-loony; nor by the look of it is Kostya himself.

Humour is like Austrian wine: it doesn't always travel, and it's likely to come laced with extraneous matter. Zinovy Zinik's grotesquenesses and knockabout seem to indicate that we are in realms of satire and allegory, but where is the satire coming from and where is the allegory going? Is Kostya supposed to represent a simple hedonism that can't thrive amidst Soviet privation, and a simple sociability that serves as a reproach to Western soullessness? But he's also a simple uncouth brute. Or is the satire at the expense of the *bien pensant* British Russophiles and radicals who see him in one or the other light? But these characters are painted in even cruder colours and are far too easy a target.

Similarly, despite the fact that the novel culminates in an allegorical riot — a chase into presocial nocturnal forests, with a Pole and a Briton on the heels of a Russian, a secret hoard of choicest aspen boletus on a nuclear base, the death-by-mushroom-knife of a member of the British unsouled underclass, not to mention attempted suicide-by-fly-agaric — despite all this, it's never really possible to work out what all the symbolic goings-on are symbolising. Something about East-West relations? Well, *maybe* . . . Something about Western unfreedom, as compared with Soviet unfreedom? Hmm . . . In a final, undercutting chapter, Zinik steps forward *in propria persona* and runs through many of the book's ideas again, in almost essayistic fashion. We hope that this time they will be made clear; it comes as a genuine shame that they aren't.

Zinik has said, with much truth, that "dissident writing" is often imprisoned by the very socialist realism and social repressiveness it is out to attack. And his own writing is undoubtedly best when the riotous ideological play quietens down and he simply describes something. The Moscow seen by callow English Clea is brilliantly done, with its hot flats and boozy parties, its cold, slushy streets and its never-ending searches for sour cream. □

PAPERBACKS

Mugged by a quark

Jenny Diski

JUST TO CHEER you up here's the best joke of the last four decades. Andrew Sinclair quotes it in **The Red and The Blue** (Coronet, £2.50), an illuminating examination of the development of what Snow called "the two cultures", epitomised by the atomic spies of the Cambridge Apostles, and the atomic scientists of the Cavendish Institute. The scientists, idealistic innocents, exchanged information freely among themselves, Russian and British; the spies, idealistic poseurs, lived in the exciting atmosphere of secrecy and didn't notice that the real secrets were being traded openly by the scientists they affected to despise.

The joke comes from Julian Huxley. He refuted Lysenko's theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics by pointing out that in spite of thousands of years of infant circumcision, Jewish males were still being born with their foreskins intact. A good enough argument, but not original. Hamlet had made the very same point three centuries previously: "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will."

I became increasingly grateful to Huxley for a good laugh as I ploughed through Paul Erdman's **The Panic of '89** (Sphere, £3.50) and then, a sucker for punishment, Gary Hart and William S. Cohen's **The Double Man** (Sphere, £3.50). Not that they weren't interesting in their way. Is there something about public office that is so unreal that the holders have to turn to fiction to keep a toehold on the world? Or is it just that nowadays experience doesn't count until you've written a novel about it? Certainly, it's curious how ineptly reality translates into fiction in the hands of someone who thinks that mere knowledge of things is enough.

Erdman, a real-life mega-economist, offers us the end of civilisation as we know it, courtesy of those troublesome and ungrateful nations, Russia, Venezuela and Switzerland. This unholy alliance conspires to bring America to its knees with a cunning plot to over-produce oil and default on their US loans. Famous international hotels, the renowned glamour of typical Swiss menus and slick racial stereotyping are supposed to soften us up for the indigestible dollar and Swiss franc stuff.

Hart (he of the *Monkey Business*) and Cohen's book offers a similar scenario: America undermined by Russian-backed terrorism. The enemy is no longer somewhere else, but actually blowing up folks in Washington DC. What underlies both these novels is a longing for a return to the dear old days of US isolationism. We should all be so lucky. I felt I should have learned something about the way the world really is from these two books by experts in their field, but found myself too punch drunk from the turgid prose and embarrassing characterisation to register whatever real information there may have been.

Cosmic Banditos (Abacus, £3.99), by someone whose name obviously isn't really A. C. Weisbecker, seemed like a complete change of gear. It manages to combine the "Shit, I'm always stoned out of my mind, but I'm cute anyway" novel of the '60s with a bang up-to-date "Isn't quantum physics a far out metaphor for . . . everything" novel of tomorrow. Or at any rate late this afternoon. This is the other side of Gary Hart's America, but perhaps not so very different beneath the superficial wildness. It has the same rugged individualism and paranoia, albeit filtered through a haze of tequila and quaaludes. It's as American as apple-pie laced with acid. The hero, a destitute marijuana smuggler, discovers the wonders of quantum physics when his Mexican bandito pal mugs a college professor and his family and brings back a physics textbook to their hideout. Having nothing else to do, he identifies himself and his random existence with the hypothesised quarks he reads about. The rest of the book is spent quantum leaping towards what our hero sees as his ultimate destiny: to get the mugged professor to believe in his (and therefore the quark's) existence. There are plentiful footnotes to guide the lay reader through the mire of quantum analogy. It's fun, but is it physics? The race seems to be on to produce the sub-atomic successor to *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. Why not?

Knut Hamsun's **Mysteries** (Picador Classics, £3.95) is an extraordinary book written at the end of the last century — the interior nightmare of a young man journeying towards his end. He arrives at a small town and follows the signs — love, a local death, the town fool — to his own nemesis. In his finely tuned madness he sees the strangeness and drama that the inhabitants choose to call normality. Reading the book, you inhabit his vision of the world and watch madness and normality, both cunning, manipulating each other, fascinated and repelled by the opposite state. A bleak and beautifully written novel.

Finally, two detectives. Kate Fansler is the soignée sleuth with a feminist conscience who solves **A Death in the Faculty** (Virago, £3.95). Amanda Cross has created a sharp and witty heroine and writes a funny, literate thriller that debates the current position of women in American academia as well as providing an interesting crime to solve.

Lieutenant Boruvka is a different kettle of fish. The stories in **The Mournful Demeanour of Lieutenant Boruvka** by the Czech Josef Skvorecky (Faber, £3.95) are tenuously linked by the lugubrious detective's guilty lust for a female colleague and a shaky relationship with his pop music-loving adolescent daughter. Some of the plots are nifty, almost Father Brownish in their way, and the idea of a depressed detective is pleasing, but occasionally it just dies on the page. Best not to take my word for it, though, for I'm hooked on trenchcoated gumshoes in Southern California, mean and moody but soft as butter when it counts. □

'This is "oral history" of a high order ... admirably restrained...' *Sunday Times*

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BRITISH JUSTICE *Cont'd from p.11*

for a "negative" finding on GCMS.

The three judges made great play of the circumstantial evidence against the men: their Republic sympathies, their journey to the funeral of an IRA bomber, their association with IRA sympathisers in the Midlands. Mr Justice Bridge in the original trial said of all this: "These matters fall a long way short of anything that anyone could possibly regard as proof."

The appeal judges improved greatly on that. "There was a wealth of evidence," they said, "as to the surrounding circumstances — which strengthened the case." Once again, if you believe what you want to believe, and disbelieve anything which contradicts it, you can come to the conclusion you first thought of.

Few of the many visitors to the Appeal Court hearing in the Birmingham case could fail to notice all three judges' open and obvious irritation with the defendants and their lawyers. Their distaste for Michael Mansfield could not be contained. "We are not a jury," snapped Lord Lane at Mansfield as he complained yet again about the barrister's "histrionics". The message was clear: juries are swayed by histrionics; judges only by cool, clear reason.

On the contrary, however, juries introduce into judging an element of popular democracy. They come to the court to hide nothing and to protect nothing — but simply to assess the evidence and the witnesses. Judges on the other hand have a great deal to protect. For the Court of Appeal, every bit as much as the Crown Court at Lancaster, was responsible for the imprisonment of the Birmingham Six, because it turned down their appeal at the time. Any mistake in the case against the men would reflect badly on the Court of Appeal, which is why the judges in that court are the very worst people to try their cases again. Indeed, their irritation even with the cautious Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, burst into their judgement. "As with so many cases referred to us by the Home Secretary," said Lord Lane, the original verdict seemed more safe the longer the appeal went on. What else could that possibly mean except that the Home Secretary would do better to keep his faintly democratic fingers off the due process of law; and that the business of deciding whether or not the courts have made fools of themselves should be left exclusively to the courts?

Unlike juries, judges inhabit a narrow, introverted and reactionary world: a world where deeper, perhaps simpler considerations are often more relevant than the facts of a particular case. The logic of this world was brilliantly outlined by that hero of the modern legal system, Lord Denning, who explained an earlier decision by the Court of Appeal to refuse to allow the six men to sue the police for assault with his now famous dictum, quoted in the *New Statesman* editorial last week. To let the six men win, he said, would mean that the police were guilty of perjury and more. "That is such an appalling vista that every sensible person would say: 'It cannot be right that these actions should go any further'."

So it is that to save society and its judiciary from Lord Denning's "appalling vista" Patrick Hill, Johnny Walker, Billy Power, Hugh McIlkenny, Gerry Hunter and Hughie Callaghan have been sent back to prison to serve out sentences for murders they quite plainly did not commit. □

LETTERS

Aids and heterosexuals

Duncan Campbell, New Statesman, London E2

Dr Fitzpatrick's commentary (*Letters* 29 Jan.) on my "Politics of Aids" article seriously misrepresented its entire thrust. At no time did I offer the "alarmist and irrational spectre of a major heterosexual epidemic". On the contrary, I drew attention to the imminent likelihood of political exploitation of the relatively slow heterosexual spread of Aids in the West, in order to re-portray Aids as a gays-only affliction.

The only comment of this kind in the article — to the effect that Aids in the 1990s will be a "predominantly heterosexual disease" — does not imply that there need be an explosion of heterosexual Aids beyond the present order of magnitude of infection. Nor was this an observation I invented — the words used form part of evidence given three years ago to the US Congress by Dr Andrew Moss of the University of California, one of the world's most experienced Aids epidemiologists.

Moss is right, for a very straightforward reason. If Aids anti-viral treatments are not now obtained as a matter of urgency, most of those infected, of whom the majority in Britain and the US are gay men, will have fallen ill and died by the later 1990s. But there is conclusive evidence that gay men, in the US at least, are no longer being infected at any significant rate. Effective anti-Aids vaccines are years away. So drug users and/or heterosexuals, whose behaviour has not altered to a remotely comparable or adequate degree, are the groups now being infected with HIV, the virus that causes Aids. Given that Aids takes an average of about seven years to develop after HIV infection, the people being infected now are going to be the Aids cases of the mid and later 1990s.

Trying to deny the impact of Aids on heterosexual activity is dangerous to all segments of the community, because it encourages unsafe sex and pushes Aids and HIV research and treatment back into the underfunded corner that has already all but guaranteed a million people around the world an early and miserable death. No one of any humanity, left or right, can assert as Dr Fitzpatrick appears to do, that to highlight this is "losing all perspective on social problems".

New light on Tory motives

Matthew Simpson, Manchester

David Thomas is pretty scathing about the response of mere politicians like Tony Benn to Lord Young's new "flexible" disposition of grants to industry, but they perhaps know more about the *politics* of Young's proposals in a world which is less perfect than Thomas imagines (*NS* 22 Jan.). Perhaps Labour politicians would dispense their patronage fairly and even-handedly. And then again, perhaps not . . .

But this is a government which has shown itself ready to use patronage for political ends. What is to stop Lord Young channelling industrial grants into constituencies which, given an extra share of prosperity, could switch from Alliance or Labour to Tory at the next election? What is to stop Lord Young from choosing to reward companies which operate a non-union policy or which negotiate single-union deals, and to choose to boost sectors which aren't unionised anyway?

We already know that the great crusade in the inner-city is designed to reinvigorate Conservatism locally. The poll tax is a blitz on Labour councils in those areas. Could industrial grants and other goodies be used to rebuild a Tory party amidst the ruins? I only ask.

Not guilt, Dr Jupp: anger

David Langsam, London SW12

I am amazed by Dr James Jupp's vitriolic attack (Letters 29 Jan.) on my assessment of Australia in 1988 (*NS* 15 Jan.). Accusing me of presenting a "collective guilt" argument, Jupp assumes (questionably) that I am white and (wrongly) that I am guilty over Australia's treatment of Aboriginal people. For the record there is not a drop of British blood in my body and my responses to the treatment of Aboriginal people, while complex, do not include guilt.

I deeply love Australia, more so since Aboriginal friends have shown me some of its hidden beauty and I can't begin to describe how much I miss a beach. But I remain angry with the injustice meted out to Aborigines. Until those wrongs are righted, no Australian can be truly proud. I am no traitor, just someone with a burning sense of natural justice. Guilt is for believers.

Specifically, Jupp questions my estimate of hundreds of thousands of Aborigines, quoting the 1986 Census figure of less than 250,000. Many Aborigines don't fill in census forms and *their* estimate is 500,000. I was under the impression that "two" was plural, anyway.

My claim that non-British migrants and their descendants outnumber their British counterparts was based on Australian press reports shortly before my departure in September 1986. While I am quite prepared to be corrected if I am wrong, Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that of Australia's 3,247,381 immigrants on Cenus night, 73 per cent described themselves as non-UK. In Victoria which is slightly more cosmopolitan than the national average (79 per cent non-UK) the census shows, in answer to the ancestry question, 39.35 per cent said British, 35.25 per cent non-British, 17.5 per cent "Australian" and eight per cent not-stated.

Most of those claiming Australian ancestry are probably of British descent rather than Aboriginal. The ABS says the figures are biased against sections of the population which have literacy problems or difficulty with English. Despite large communities, neither Turkey nor Vietnam are listed as countries of ancestry. There is no evidence for English-born Jupp's claim that British descendents are 75 per cent of the population.

I did not say Aborigines have lived in Australia for 200,000 years. I used the (Jupp-agreed) 40,000 figure, bracketing *possibly 200,000* because it is in dispute and such a claim has been made. To say Aborigines have one third of the Northern Territory is simplistic, suppressing the complaint that it is mostly desert.

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It is ironic that Jupp writes "Aborigines now enjoy the same legal status as all other citizens" and are no longer passive victims — the day after I read those words I was told Paul Pryor had hanged himself after being jailed by police in rural Victoria. A talented Aboriginal actor, musician and dancer, Paul was a friend of mine and should not be dead. But make no mistake Dr Jupp, I don't feel guilt. It's anger.

Explain yourselves

Tom Gallagher, Bradford
Labour Party members concerned at the alarming concentration of power in 10 Downing Street ought to note the behaviour of 35 Labour (and 6 Alliance) MPs who stayed away from the crucial second reading of Richard Shepherd's Protection of Official Information bill on 15 January.

Despite the imposition of a three-line whip nearly one hundred Tories rebelled and the bill was defeated by only 37 votes. Mrs Thatcher's furious reaction to the bill ought to have been a signal for all opposition MPs to be in Parliament on that day. Among the absentees were Bryan Gould, Denzil Davies, the recent beneficiary of a libel action against the BBC's "Jasper Carrot Show", and that tireless defender (in print) of libertarian values, Michael Foot.

It grieves me that 12 of the 35 represented seats in Scotland where MPs have good cause to loosen Mrs Thatcher's dangerous grip on the democratic pulse of the nation. Five of them were MPs for seats in Glasgow, the city which witnessed the night raid by the Special Branch on the BBC Studios almost exactly one year ago.

Why was such a rare opportunity squandered? Inertia? Labour's fixation with economic questions to the exclusion of concern with the essential liberties of the citizen? Or a churlish and self-defeating refusal to make common cause with Tories concerned with their leader's all-out bid to monopolise positions of power?

When an inveterate Conservative like Teddy Taylor MP can wave goodbye to the prospect of an early knighthood by sponsoring Mr Shepherd's bill, the 35 erring Labour MPs deserve, at the very least, to be asked for an explanation by their constituency associations.

US healthcare crisis

Josephine Bacon, London N15
Elgy Gillespie has actually *understated* the position in the United States (*NS* 15 Jan). Far from American health care being "the best medical attention system in the world", George Bush knows full well that health care in the United States is in the throes of undergoing a crisis far more severe than that of the Health Service crisis in Britain, and the next US administration, whatever its colour, will be forced to take some sort of drastic action.

The Americans not covered by health insurance do not just include the middle class self-employed, as Ms Gillespie maintains; they include a growing number of employees, because businesses are now claiming that they can't afford the ever-rising premiums. Having lived for four years in California, I can assure you that the premiums are far more than the $200 a month she quotes, and then there is still a "deductible", an amount which must be paid on every visit to the doctor *before* you can claim the insurance money. The deductible may amount to as much as $50. Many insurers will only insure you at the hospital of their choice.

Each state has a multiplicity of health insurance companies, each with their own costly administration overheads, including lavish advertising. In addition to the basic insurers, there are the "topping-up" insurance companies who provide extra cover for those whose normal insurance is inadequate, and those who only service the over-65s as an addition to MediCal (the basic free healthcare given to pensioners in California). As with all private insurance companies, if they can possibly wriggle out of a commitment they will do so, and if it looks like you have a chronic condition which is going to be costly for them, they'll allege it was pre-existing before you took out health insurance.

Furthermore, *no one* in the United States can insure themselves completely against any medical eventuality. While I was living in California, a friend broke his leg at work. It was 5.00 am, the management were not on duty, so the ambulance took him to the nearest hospital. His employer's health insurance did not cover him at this particular hospital. The costs therefore devolved on him. Setting the broken leg, including a one-night stay in hospital, cost him over $6,000! To have the pins taken out a year later cost another $4,000. Fortunately, he recovered the money by sueing (the fact that you have to resort to law to recover medical costs in even a minor accident case is something never mentioned over here when private insurance schemes are being considered).

I simply don't understand your correspondent's reference to low morale among "doctors and medical personnel". I have both friends and relatives in the American medical profession. While nurses are paid the same kind of slave wages they are paid here, doctors are obscenely overpaid, at least in California. No doctor ever makes home visits even to children and babies, junior doctors are given far less clinical practice than they are in this country so they are comparatively poorly trained, and they mete out cavalier treatment to those who are on MediCal or Medicaid.

The most ominous sign of the change in American public opinion is to be found a recent survey conducted by *The Orange County Register*, a newspaper serving probably the wealthiest, greediest, most selfish and most right-wing district in the United States. Asked whether people wanted socialised medicine, even if it meant higher taxes (a bogey man always waved under the noses of Americans by right-wing politicians) readers answered with an overwhelming "yes". That newspaper is read in the White House.

Stage-managing hostilities

Christopher Fordham, London SW7
Joan Smith claims that "the threat to Britain from the USSR since 1945 is probably no more real than that from the Germans in 1903". This is hardly reassuring. Historical research now shows that Europe did not tumble accidentally into war in August 1914. The war was deliberately stage-managed by the Berlin Foreign Ministry in the expectation that limited German war aims could be achieved as swiftly and with as little cost as in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71. Britain needs to base its defence policies on more than the assumption that the Soviet Union "probably" won't make the same errors of judgement some time in the future.

The next atrocity

David Craig, Carnforth
Your poetry reviewer Robert Sheppard (*NS* 29 Jan.) doesn't much like metaphors, especially if they help poems to win competitions. But the lines from my book *Against Looting* that he demurs at, "Deep in the Tube the prudent and the wise/Are heaped like zyklon'd Jews", is hardly a metaphor or a simile, more a factual comparison between heaps of people asphyxiated in a firestorm after nuclear bombing and heaps of Jews asphyxiated by gas in a death camp. When he asks (as if there were no convincing answer), "What *exactly* is this comparison signifying?", my reply has to be quite simple: the power of the latest machinery to maximise atrocity, at Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Sobibor from 1943-5, at Dresden, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki in 1945, and at some other megadeath site in the conceivable future. This is not really very much like comparing a champagne bottle to a smoking gun.

Fiery

Neil Berry, London
The fiery Barbara Altounyan (Letters 29 Jan.), who characterises me as a pusillanimous liberal, afraid of admitting the existence of "dowry violence" in Britain, is locked in combat with a phantom.

In my article on dowry violence and "gender abortion", I stressed that it was not in doubt that these things are taking place — and I assure Altounyan that my horror of them, and desire that they be exposed, is as great as hers. My quarrel was with the "serious media" for leaving the impression — the *Observer*'s slapdash, sensationalist report on dowry violence was the worst offender — that the majority of Asians are implicated in the abuses of a minority.

Altounyan believes that the black press, too, found the issue of dowry violence ideologicaly uncomfortable and accordingly averted its gaze. In fact, the news that instances of dowry violence in Britain have been multiplying was originally broken by the Asian paper *New Life*.

Twelfth night

Rhys Williams, Tregaron, Dyfed
John Lloyd (*NS* 22 Jan.) really made a find with the "long neglected essay by Sir Malvolio Normanstone." Still, it's no wonder it's been so neglected in view of the fact that Sir Malvolio thought that Shakespeare's Lear had been blinded. Wrong character, John . . . sorry, Sir Malvolio.

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MEETINGS

BUDDHIST MEDITATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE. Introductory talk, January 19. 6 week course (in London) Tuesday evenings, beginning January 26. Details telephone Nick Rimmer 01-253 3060 (day) or Kathy 01-639 7584 (evenings). W4.5

THEOSOPHY explains reincarnation, karma, God, man and nature. Talks, informal meetings. Sun. 8pm. SAE for free literature, book list. ULT, 62 Queens Gdns. London W2. W43.6

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON (Gower St, WC1E 6BT). Gustave Tuck Theatre at 5.30 pm. Thurs. 11 Feb. Chambers Memorial Lecture by Professor J. B. Trapp, 'John Colet, Dean of St Paul's, 1467-1519'; Fri. 19 Feb. The Commonwealth Fund Lecture in American History by Professor George M. Fredrickson, 'State and Society in the Gilded Age'; Tues. 22 Mar. Seton Memorial Lecture by Dr D. L. d'Avray, 'Some Franciscan Ideas About the Body'. Complete list of public lectures (including lunch-hour lectures) available from Publications Office. (Stamped envelope required.) W6.4

AGENDA

Deadline: 2pm Mondays

THE COGERS, founded 1755, discuss/debate the "Events of the Week" every Saturday 8pm at the "Albion", Ludgate Circus, EC4. All welcome.

FRI 12 FEB

LECTURE: Prof. Paul Preston 'The Battle of Tarama, The International Brigade, The War in Spain 1936-39'. Marx House, Clerkenwell Green, EC1. 7pm. International Brigade Association.

SAT 13 FEB

LABOUR AND THE RURAL AREAS—10.00am to 4.30pm, at Enterprise Centre, York. Speakers include David Clark M.P. Price £2 or £1 (unwaged). Ring days Heather Hoaksey (0924 291221), or evenings John Grogan (0532 434050).

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ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY 01-638 8891. **BARBICAN THEATRE: A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM** 5, 6 Feb. **THE WIZARD OF OZ** 8-13 Feb. **THE PIT: OLD YEAR'S EVE** by Peter Speyer, 5, 6 Feb. **DEATHWATCH/THE MAIDS** by Jean Genet. 8, 9 Feb: **SPECULATORS** by Tony Marchant 10-13 Feb. Matinees Thursday & Saturday 2 pm. Eve perfs. 7.30.

PERSONAL

HAVE A HEART FOR THE NHS Show your support for the nurses with a Valentines Message to Thatcher. Special cards 5 for 50p. Post free. London Communist Party, 224-236 Walworth Road, S.E.17. Tel: 01-708 1204. W6.1

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ACTIVE MALE, early fifties, arts orientated (working life in education), enjoys walking, travel, domesticity, the Guardian and the Archers seeks a like-minded (probably Northern based), lively female with whom to share some or all of these interests and perhaps to develop others. Box (05)0868. W6.19

ACTIVE MALE (54), unattached, (working life in education), enjoys the arts, walking, back-packing holidays, the Guardian, domesticity and the Archers, would like to share some of these interests with a warm, lively female (children no problem). Yorkshire, North East England/anywhere. Box (05)0857. W6.25

AFFECTIONATE, ATTRACTIVE, intelligent, humorous, late forties professional lady—smokes—likes eating out, evenings in, travel and good conversation, seeks similar man for caring/sharing relationship. London/Brighton based. Box (05)0870. W6.20

ARCHAEOLOGIST, 35, travelling to the Greek islands for a month, commencing early May 1988, seeks female companion. Box (05)0706. W6.21

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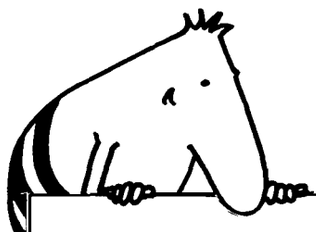

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Weekend competition

No 3011 **Set by Russell Lucas**

Perhaps James Anderton *is* a real prophet. Could we have excerpts either from an Anderton Psalm (max. 12 lines) or the Andertonian Creed (max. 120 words). By 17 February please.

No 3008 **Set by Tim Hopkins**

Apt anagrams of magazine/newspaper titles.

Report **By Ms de Meaner**

So speedily did you do these that, having nothing interesting left with which to fill up your dreary weekends, you went on to write long, discursive PSs on everything from the state of your typing (John E. Holme) to the fact that, in 99 years of trying, you've won the Comp only once (P. M. Rowe). Though we *love* to know what you're thinking, doing, saying, wondering, etc., I'm afraid I've space only to reply that, yes, nearly everyone turned *Today* into "toady" (Gerard Benson) and no (George Cowley) we certainly shan't set a limerick beginning as you suggest. Two pounds per magazine/newspaper anagram below and I don't want *any* of you whingeing away if somebody else has gone and won with the same idea as yours.

The Spectator: OTT crap sheet.
BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

The Economist: Hot monies, etc.
Practical Motorist: Capri trim cost a lot.
A. D. GIBBONS

Radio Times: Tired? So am I.
GERARD BENSON

The Daily Telegraph: I help the Great Lady.
GAVIN EWART

News on Sunday: No nudes? (Yawns).
TONY BURROWS

Sunday Telegraph: Hates red gun-play.
R. A. ENGLAND

Sporting Life: Profit in legs.
JIM ANTHONY

The Literary Review: Levity here, wit rare.
JOHN O'BYRNE

Sunday Times: "I say, dustmen!"
D. A. PRINCE

The Guardian: Haut reading.
FRANK McDONALD

The Guardian: A huge nadir.
W. THOMPSON

Times Higher Educational Supplement: Mum, I put the case: learning; does it help?
SID FIELD

Country Life: Nice, Toryful.
NOEL PETTY

Marxism Today: I'm a smart doxy.
SARA SPAIN

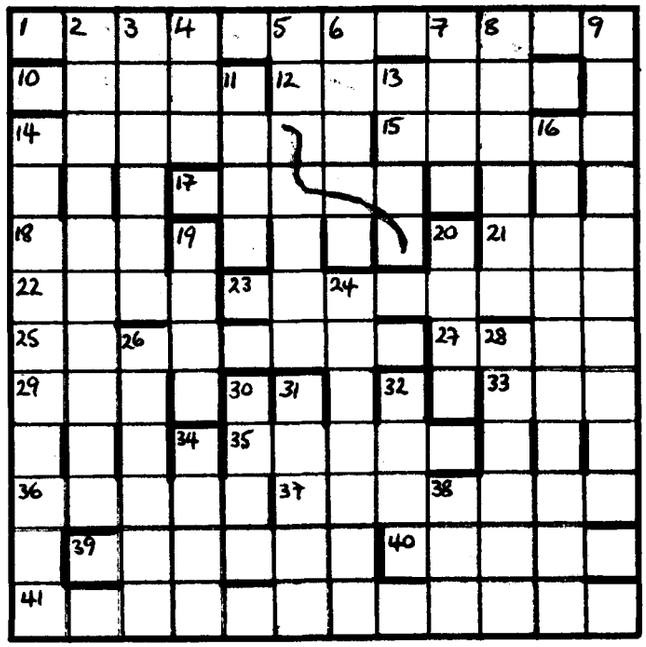
The Lady: Deathly.
T. J. MOOREY

Salamanca 130

'Doctor, Who?'

PRIZES: Copies of *Collins Paperback Dictionary & Thesaurus* for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Salamanca 130, New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ, by first post 29 February.

COLLINS DICTIONARIES



Six answers (three of which consist of two words) unique to the lifestyle of the mystery person must be entered in the grid, each minus a letter wherever it occurs this letter helping make up part of the identity. Unchecked letters in these CITE BRAVER ONE. In the completed grid the full identity may be traced by adjacent squares and shaded to form a roughly-recognisable image of another item of lifestyle (any difficulty involved in deciding what this is may be resolved by the marked squares). (One place name is included, and 24 is in OED.)

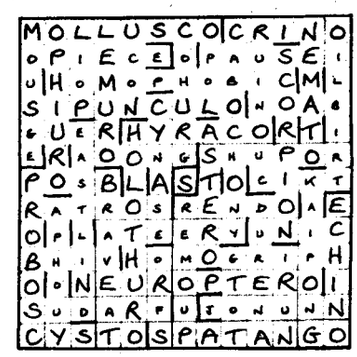
ACROSS

1 A stained mess (sauce could be involved) where one's been shot, say? (12)
10 Foreign money Pakistanis use (when not ridiculously skint!) (5)
14 Discharged with energy, bearing diamonds (7)
15 Being rude, improper, pointed (but not like this!) (5)
17 Polishing-disc one's used for stone (5)
18 Spin — not having consumed — then collapse (3)
21 Girl turning says "Pardon?" (3)
22 It's base breadth which catches a skier's rear? (4)
23 Fish around, finding alcohol which will depress (8)
27 Jazz singer, managing highest of notes, sustaining length (4)
29 That's dispensed about top of cone (3)
33 Wood all right for sheltering it (3)
35 With which you can see something on TV when there's nothing to see? (5)
36 Prickly shrub whch can produce blood sticking end of spines in (5)
37 Force used to whip individual head of religious (7)
39 Group assigned to special mission: one led it abroad (6)
40 Cross the meridian in error, in silence (5)

DOWN

3 Is seat put to use in this break-time? (6)
4 May be ridden when first saddled (3)
5 *Is accepting*'s not right for this: not making a sign of it? (7)
6 Like certain acid; acid, oily part rising (5)
7 Swiss river region whose end is its beginning (4)
8 I tried to clear up — so it wasn't such a 32? (6)
11 No damage to Bombay boat going over tree (4)
13 Point in hollow Gothic ornament? (4)
14 Partially burying a huge print cunningly disguised (2 words, 10)
16 Enliven by stimulating heart that is lax? (10)
19 Bear some rancour, say (4)
20 Foreign money, initially obtainable from window (4)
24 Old shoe, square as well as the rest (7)
26 Not so far away, arrives in no time (6)
28 Unfortunate cop needs luck about to drop into Arthur Daley's store? (6)
30 Layer of eye, a partially mauve area (4)
32 Bungle an errand that takes no time (4)
34 When Italian's climbing what might he drink? (4)
38 Limp from hard work (3)

Solution to Salamanca 129



Solvers should have no -IDEA, this suffix omitted from unclued answers.

Prizewinners to Salamanca 129

J. Wilkie
(Glasgow)
Jack Walton
(Epsom, Surrey)
John E. Brown
(Birmingham)

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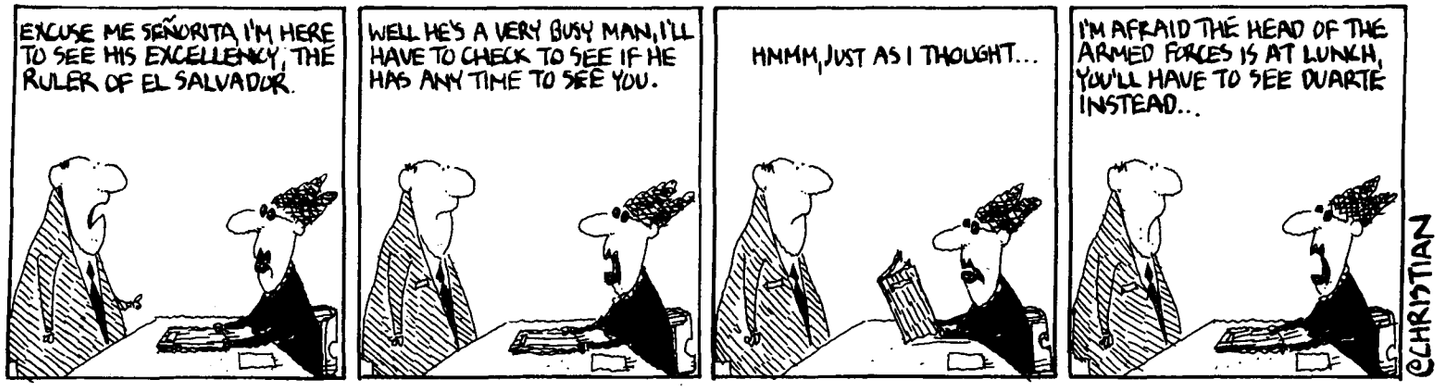
EXCUSE ME SEÑORITA, I'M HERE TO SEE HIS EXCELLENCY, THE RULER OF EL SALVADOR.
WELL HE'S A VERY BUSY MAN, I'LL HAVE TO CHECK TO SEE IF HE HAS ANY TIME TO SEE YOU.
HMMM, JUST AS I THOUGHT...
I'M AFRAID THE HEAD OF THE ARMED FORCES IS AT LUNCH, YOU'LL HAVE TO SEE DUARTE INSTEAD...
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Chess

WHAT A CONTRAST in the way Short and Speelman began their candidates' matches. Nigel won his opening game in the most composed and competent style, whereas the first game between Jon and Yasser Seirawan was simply crazy!

Short and Sax contested a sharp variation of the Sicilian. It is a line that has been deeply studied by Hungarian players and a good deal of the theory has been derived from Sax's own games. You can be sure, then, that Short and Nunn, who worked together in preparation for this match, had examined the position at move 19 and cooked up the innovation in advance:

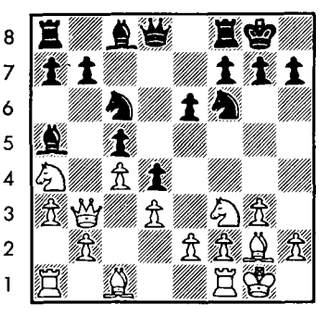
Short-Sax, Game 1. Sicilian Defence.
1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 e5 6. Ndb5 d6 7. Bg5 a6 8. Na3 b5 The old move here, from the 1950s when this line was known as the Pelikan Variation (after an Argentinian IM), was 8 . . . Be6. Then in the 1960s some players from Chelyabinsk, in particular Sveshnikov, started to get excellent results with the bold thrust of the b-pawn. **9. Bxf6 gxf6 10. Nd5 f5 11. Bd3 Be6 12. Qh5 Bg7 13. 0-0 f4 14. c4 bxc4 15. Bxc4 0-0 16. Rac1 Ne7** So far the play has gone straight down the modern main line. But I wonder if Sax would have fared any better with 16 . . . Rb8 here. **17. Rfd1 Rc8 18. Nxe7+ Qxe7** Gyula Sax had happy memories of this position from Matanovic-Sax, 1978 Olympiad: 19. Qe2 Kh8 20. Bxa6? Rxc1 21. Rxc1 f5 22. exf5 Bxf5 23. Nb5 e4 24. Nc3 Qg5! 25. f3 exf3 26. Qxf3 Bg4 27. Qd5 Be5 and Black played . . . f3 and crashed through on the K-side. But Short has a big improvement ready. **19. Rc3! Kh8 20. b3 f5 21 Rh3 h6 22. Bxe6 Qxe6 23. Rhd3!** It would be a terrible mistake to play 23. Nc4? fxe4 24. Rxd6 Qxd6!. Play hereabouts revolves around the strategically crucial squares e4 and d5. **Rcd8 24. Qe2 fxe4 25. Qxe4 f3** A pawn-sacrifice that is positionally forced. For otherwise White will get a total blockade with f3, Rd5 and Nc4, after which the Black Bishop would be worthless. **26. Nc4! Rf4 27. Qd5 Qg4 28. Rxf3 Rxf3 29. Qxf3 Qxf3 30. gxf3** The doubled f-pawns are not a serious weakness after the exchange of Queens. **d5 31. Kf1 Bf6 32. Nb6 d4 33. Ke2** The d-pawn has got past d5 only to run into another blockade on d3 and e4, and Black's B is still bad. **Bg5 34. Nc4 Bf4 35. h3 Rg8 36. b4!** A beautifully clear solution: the passed b-pawn ties Black down completely. 36 . . . Rb8 37. Rb1 followed by a4 and b5 makes no difference. **Rg2 37. a4 Kg7 38. b5 axb5 39. axb5 Kf6 40. b6 Ke6 41. b7 Rg8 42. Rb1 Rb8 43. Rb5 Kd7 44. Na5 Kc7 45. Kd3 Kd6 46. h4 Kc7 47. Rb2 Bh2 48. Ke4 Bf4 49. Rc2+ Kd7 50. Kd3 Bh2 51. Rc1 Bf4 52. Rg1 Kd6 53. Kc4 1-0** A model positional game — and a reminder that Black can't always get away with having a hole on d5 in the Sicilian.

Now for the antics of **Speelman-Seirawan** (Game 1). In the diagram Black has just set up a reversed Benoni-formation with the advance . . . d5-d4. You will notice that the White Knight is now attacking the pawn at c5. If 10 . . . Qe7 11. Bg5 is annoying, but 10 . . . Nd7 seems perfectly reasonable. Instead:

10 . . . b6? Why should Black want to strand his Ba5 like this? Is it just a trap? But GMs aren't supposed to play for traps. And in any case . . . **11. Ne5! Nxe5 12. Bxa8 Qe8 13. Bg2** I can only think that Seirawan's intention was to play 13 . . . Bd7. That does look as if it wins the Knight on a4. But the reply would be 14. Qa2! Bxa4 15. b4, and Black loses one of his Bishops. **Nh5 14. Qd1 Bd7 15. e3?** As he has been given the exchange, just 15. b3 should win in the end. Having more Rooks, one wants to open files. But the way Speelman does it weakens his pawns. Best was 15. b4! Bxa4 16. Qd2 or 15 . . . cxb4 16. axb4 Bxb4 17. e3. **Nf6 16. b3 dxe3 17. Bxe3 Bxa4 18. bxa4 Qd7** With d3 as well as a4 under fire it suddenly isn't so easy for White. **19. d4 Nxc4 20. dxc5 Nxe3 21. fxe3 bxc5 22. Qxd7 Nxd7 23. Rab1 c4** What was it Nimzowitsch said about the passed pawn being a menace that must be kept under lock and key? **24. Rb7 Nc5 25. Rxa7 Bb6 26. Ra8 Nb3 27. Rxf8+ Kxf8 28. Re1 c3 29. Be4 Nd2** In this case the blockade on the white squares is not successful: 30. Bc2 Nf3+. **30. Bb7** ½-½. 30 . . . Nb3 repeats the position.

Next week: how Short and Speelman both won with a game to spare.

Solution to last week's position
[White **Ke4, Rd3, Nf4**; Black **Kc1, Na4, Nb1, a2**]
By **Manvelyan** (1985), White to play and draw: **1. Ne2+ Kb2 2. Rb3+ Kc2** 2 . . . Kxb3 3. Nc1+ etc. **3. Nd4+ Kc1** 3 . . . Kd1 4. Rd3+ Nd2+ 5. Ke3 a1=Q 6. Rxd2+ and the next check is a fork. **4. Kf5!** You'll see why in 5 moves time! **a1=Q 5. Rc3+! Kb2 6. Rc2+ Ka3 7. Rc3+! Ka2 8. Rc2+ Nb2 9. Rc1!** If the WK were on f4 this would fail to 9 . . . Nd3+. **Nd3 10. Rc2+ Ka3 11. Rc3+ Ka2** The final point is 11 . . . Ka4 12. Rc4+ Nb4 13. Rxb4+. **12. Rc2+ Nb2 13. Rc1**, and a positional draw.



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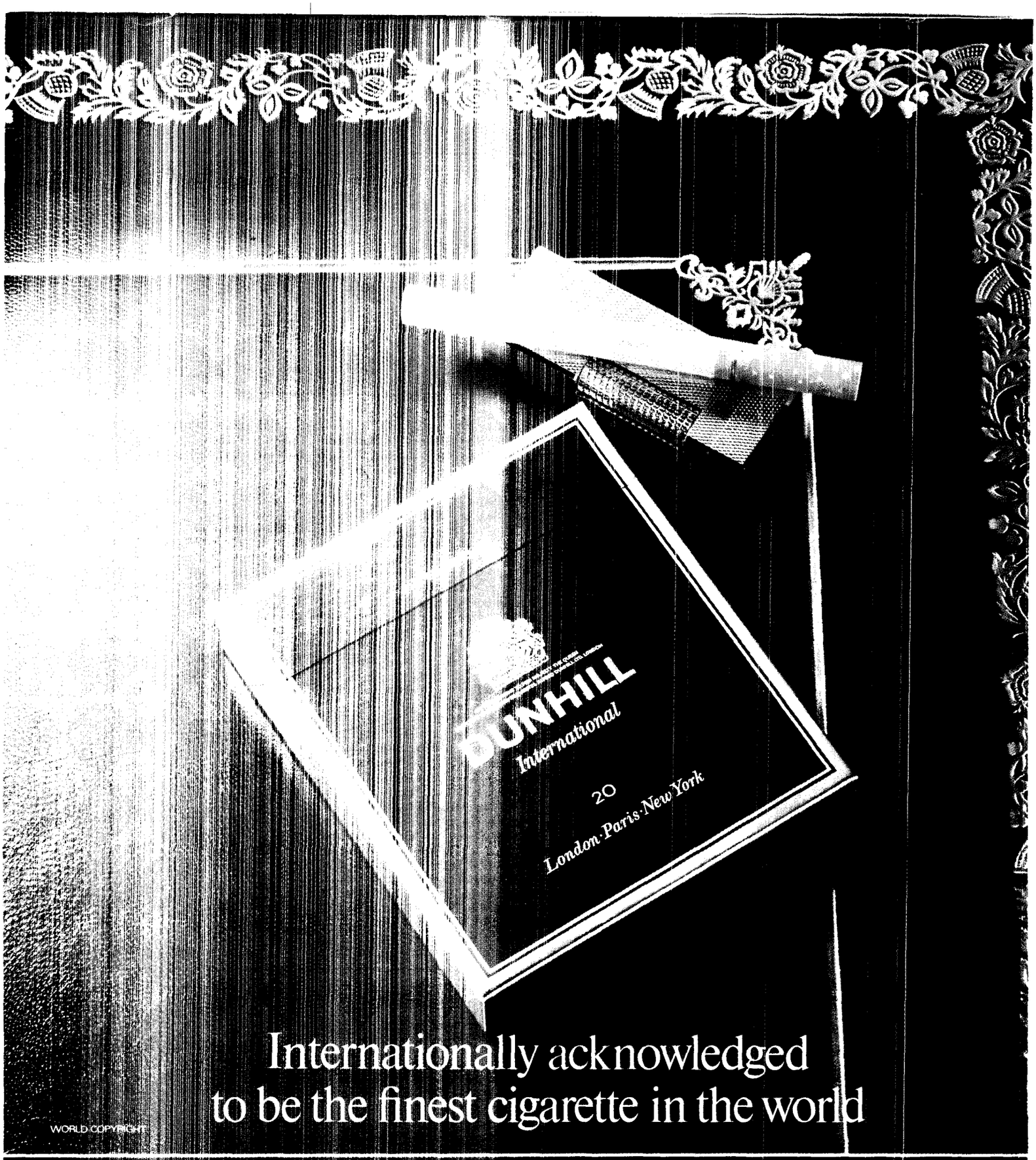

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